

PATHFINDER[®]

ADVENTURE PATH PART 3 OF 6



Kingmaker

THE VARNHOLD VANISHING

by Greg A. Vaughan



THE NOMEN PROBLEM

Source: Charter from Restov
Task: The Nemen Centaurs have long caused trouble for southern Brevoy. Violent and territorial, they are a constant thorn in the side of any attempt to settle and civilize the eastern Stelen Lands.
Completion: Either drive the Nemen Centaurs out of the Stelen Lands, or secure a treaty with them.
Reward: For securing peace with the Nemen (or eradicating them; either solution sits well with Brevoy), the swordlords of Restov are willing to pay a 4,000 gp reward.



WANTED: MANTICORES

Source: Wanted poster
Task: Local (and quite eccentric) poet Iosis Vemarelian wants to write a complex epic using only pens crafted from manticore quills. He wants a healthy collection of quills to see him through this strange project.
Completion: Quills harvested from at least two manticores should be enough to satisfy Iosis.
Reward: In exchange for a delivery of quills, Iosis has promised a payment of a rare book of ancient halfling poetry worth 3,000 gp.



MMMMM... EELS!

Source: A local innkeeper
Task: Local innkeeper Beven Armaki has announced an eel bake, but he's tired of plain old river eels. He's heard that the silver eels of Lake Silverstep make for particularly fine dining and has asked for a delivery of two dozen freshly caught eels.
Completion: Catch and deliver 12 silver eels.
Reward: Not only does Beven invite whoever delivers the eels to take part in the eel bake free of charge, but he also rewards the fisherman with a family heirloom: a +2 buckler.

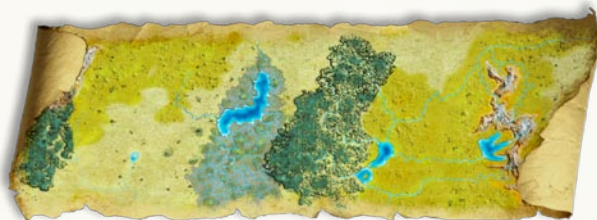


WANTED: SPIDERSILK

Source: A local weaver
Task: Chamaie Lerian has heard that the giant trap door spiders that live in the hills east of the Tiers of Levenies spin the softest silk in the area. She asks for a delivery of 50 square yards of good silk harvested from several spider dens.
Completion: One spider den should yield 10 square yards of usable silk; bring 50 yards to Chamaie.
Reward: Chamaie promises a cloak of protection +2 as a reward to whoever can supply her with silk.

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Kingmaker

THE VARNHOLD VANISHING

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The Stuff of Legends

This volume of *Pathfinder Adventure Path* contains the 33rd adventure we've done since we started this product line. That's basically one-third of the way to 100. It's the atomic number of arsenic. It's the number of cantos in each of the three parts of Dante's *Divine Comedy*. And when you get right down to it, I'm kind of shocked it's taken us 33 *Adventure Path* installments to get to the adventure where the PCs go up against and (hopefully) defeat the lich.

Sure, we were talking about liches as early as *Pathfinder Adventure Path #2*, which is where we revealed that in Golarion, the path to lichdom is different for every single person. And then, in volume #5, we threw our first actual lich at the PCs, but he was hardly a "big bad end guy." It wasn't until this adventure that a lich got to hit the big time in *Pathfinder* in that role. And I suspect that the cyclops lich Vordakai is going to be a memorable foe indeed.

The funny part is that he didn't start out as a lich. When I assigned this adventure to Greg Vaughan (at a super secret meeting between Greg, Wes Schneider, Rob

McCreary, and me that took place about 10 feet south of the front entrance to PaizoCon 2009 next to a planter box infested with creepy, distracting, red bugs), all we really knew was that the main bad guy was some sort of undead cyclops, and that he was responsible for the sudden and mysterious depopulation of the city of Varnhold (so named because it let us use a bit of alliteration with the word "vanishing" in the adventure's title). Greg went home and whipped up a killer adventure (especially that room with the flood trap, the zombie cyclopes, and the giant eel... wow...) and Vincent Dutrait created an exceptionally creepy look for the bad guy's appearance on the cover of this very book...

...but he still wasn't a lich.

In Greg's original turnover, he was a dread zombie (using the template from Green Ronin's excellent *Advanced Bestiary*) with a huge pile of crazy powers and a penchant for cracking open the skulls of his victims and eating the brains inside like they were hard-boiled eggs. But as I started developing the adventure, I made my realization—

Pathfinder Adventure Path had made it one-third of the way to triple digits without having a lich boss!

And so Vordakai underwent a transformation. He kept his brain-eating habit (that was just too juicy to lose), but everything else got a big dose of lich-ification. I had to tone him down a little bit, of course—a full-on 11th-level wizard cyclops lich would be a CR 14 monster, and a bit too much to throw at a party that's only 9th level. And that's when I came up with the idea for atrophied liches—a neat and flavorful way to sidestep the sometimes limiting prerequisite of a lich having to be an 11th-level caster. In the end, Vordakai's still a bit tougher than what you'd get with a human 11th-level wizard lich, even though he's only able to cast 5th-level spells. Don't let that lead you astray! Underestimating anyone who's been alive for over 10,000 years isn't a good tactic, no matter what the situation.

So there you go: the somewhat convoluted story about how it took us 33 months to put a lich on the cover of a *Pathfinder Adventure Path*. And I promise it won't take as many more months to do an Adventure Path where the main bad guy of the whole thing is a lich—but that might be giving too much about my plans for *Pathfinder Adventure Path* #38 away!

REAL WORLD LEGENDS

Students of early American history will no doubt immediately recognize the primary inspiration for “The Varnhold Vanishing.” If you don't, do yourself a favor and hop onto your nearest Internet connection and read up on the story of Roanoke Colony. The short version goes something like this: the colony was found mysteriously abandoned on August 18, 1590—not a single trace of the more than a hundred colonists was in evidence, and the only clue as to the cause of the vanishing was the word “Croatoan” carved into a post of the fort and “Cro” carved into a nearby tree. Every house had been taken apart, every person had gone missing, and before a proper search could be mounted, a massive storm drove the discoverers of the mystery off. There are numerous theories as to what caused the disappearance of Roanoke Colony, of course—some more believable than others. But the story itself has long lodged in my brain as a great bit of American legend. I've been itching to get an adventure inspired by these events into print for years, and here, with Greg's able help, we have it.

I suspect that the reasons behind Varnhold's vanishing are a bit more supernatural than the truth behind Roanoke. At least, I certainly *hope* they are!

BRAND-NEW CITY STATS

Okay; enough about liches and vanishing colonies. Take a moment to sneak on over to pages 11–12 of this book and check out the stat blocks there for the settlements of Nivakta's Crossing and Restov. Notice anything different?

Well, you should! Because this adventure marks the debut of a brand-new format for settlement stat blocks. Fully detailed in Paizo's upcoming *GameMastery Guide*, this city stat block is intended to be mostly self-explanatory in the Demographics and Marketplace portions. (You should probably note that the initial magic items listed as being available for purchase should change every few months if the PCs don't buy them!)

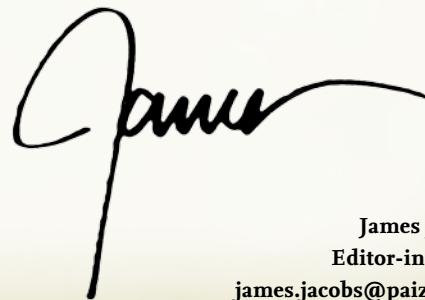
It's the three lines near the top of these stat blocks that are likely to cause confusion if you don't yet have access to the *GameMastery Guide*. Fortunately, you can completely ignore these three lines without affecting play if you wish. But for those who want to utilize the strange new bits of information at the start of these stat blocks, the following quick rules should suffice.

Modifiers: Each city has six modifiers. Apply these modifiers to skill checks made in the city as follows: Corruption (Bluff against city officials; outdoor Stealth checks), Crime (Sense Motive checks to avoid being bluffed; Sleight of Hand to pickpocket), Economy (Craft, Perform, and Profession checks made to generate income), Law (Intimidate to make opponents friendly; Diplomacy checks to alter attitudes of government officials), Lore (Diplomacy checks to gather information; Knowledge checks while doing research in a library), and Society (Disguise checks; Diplomacy checks to alter attitudes of non-government officials).

Qualities: Think of these as “Feats” for a city; they modify its statistics. You only really need to know what a city's qualities are when you're creating the city's stat block; since each of these cities have their stats prefigured for you, you can simply use the names of these as inspiration in describing the city or running encounters that take place there.

Danger: If you use random encounter tables arranged so that higher die rolls equate to more dangerous encounters, add this modifier to rolls made on urban encounter charts.

The *GameMastery Guide* should be hitting shelves sometime in May if all goes according to plan. Check it out! There's a lot more than fancy new city stat blocks in there!



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The Varnhold Vanishing

Greetings from Restov and congratulations on your triumphs. I hope that we are entering a time in which these lands will be called stolen only in history texts! Yet it would seem that for all your victories, your fellow colonists to the east have met with trouble. The settlers of Varnhold are not responding to messengers—and indeed, some envoys have gone missing as well. You may have noticed this on your own, but as the political climate here in Restov grows more turbulent, we find ourselves increasingly limited in the amount of aid we can send. Certainly, we cannot send troops south to Varnhold to investigate without our overly watchful lords to the north misinterpreting the act. And so it falls to you, I fear, to investigate the Varnhold mystery. For if something dire has befallen the colony, you must realize that your own could be next!

Trusting in your discretion and expedience,
Jamandi Aldori—Swordlord of Restov

Advancement Track

“The Varnhold Vanishing” assumes four player characters using the Medium advancement track for XP. Characters should be 7th level when they begin this adventure. The sandbox nature of “The Varnhold Vanishing” means that the PCs can encounter any of the locations at any level, although the more difficult encounters are placed such that they’re physically more difficult to reach. By the time the PCs are ready to move on from the village of Varnhold, they should be well into 8th level—and by the time they’re exploring Vordakai’s tomb, they should be 9th level, ending the adventure as they become 10th level. Remember that PCs gain 100 XP for each hex they fully explore in the Nomen Heights, and that they can earn more XP by building up their nation and cities (see *Pathfinder Adventure Path* #32)!

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

In the age before Earthfall, the fortunes of Golarion were forged by vast empires like Azlant and Thassilon. Yet other empires existed in these ancient times as well—empires ruled not by humans but by creatures of legend. The cyclopes ruled many such empires, notably one in Garund and another in northwestern Casmaron. Yet as with their contemporaries, Earthfall brought an end to their rule. And unlike Azlant or Thassilon, the cyclops empires have been all but forgotten in the Age of Lost Omens.

Yet while the cyclopes may have been forgotten, they have not vanished from the face of Golarion altogether. Pockets of their kind exist today, although they possess but a shadow of their former glory. Only in remote locations does evidence of the ancient cyclops empires still exist, protected from the march of time by preservative magic akin to that which protected the mightiest of Thassilon’s monuments, or watched over still by ancient spirits and tenacious undead too stubborn to move on.

One such remnant exists deep in the Tors of Levenies in the form of the cyclops lich Vordakai. Although the name has long been lost to history, Vordakai was once a notorious tyrant and necromancer in Casmaron’s ancient cyclops empires. Vordakai himself did not survive the uprising and turmoil that followed Earthfall during the Age of Darkness, yet ironically his name did. The least of his apprentices appropriated Vordakai’s name in the hope of using its power to rebuild an empire; yet in the end, this task would require more than notoriety. This new Vordakai became the last Vordakai when those he was attempting to command rose up against him and, in an ironic turn of events, trapped him in a crypt of his own design, hidden away at the westernmost edge of Casmaron, in a minor mountain range oft overlooked by explorers and colonists.

As the ages wore on and Vordakai’s torpor changed into an ageless slumber, his name persisted in the legends of the region’s centaur tribes. Tribal shamans, inspired by visions, often brought the centaurs to a steppeland called the Dunsward in the region near Vordakai’s tomb, where they tasked their tribes with the sacred duty of guardianship over the Valley of the Dead—the legendary

entrance to Vordakai’s tomb. These shamans saw that the ancient cyclops tyrant did not rest easy in his grave, and they foresaw a time when his wickedness and the pent-up evil of the extinct cyclops empire might one day be released by the unwary to plague the lands again.

Yet more recently, the Nomen Centaurs have faced less exotic enemies and fears—Taldor’s expansion into the Stolen Lands led to much warfare between the Nomen and humanity and helped to maintain the Stolen Lands’ reputation for being inhospitable to civilization. Even as the domain of Rostland was established, Taldan colonists ripped through the centaur war herds to the south, pushing them to the fringes of their former rangelands and farther and farther from their guardianship and traditional homeland. With the back of the centaur resistance broken and driven into the hinterlands of their new colony, the Taldan forces focused their efforts elsewhere and the cairn stood once again unguarded and largely forgotten.

So great were the effects of this war that much of the tribe’s lore and identity were lost as well. The original reason for their guardianship was forgotten within a few generations and transformed into a territorial aggression that extended around the eastern fringes of the human lands. When Taldor finally abandoned the Stolen Lands, the Nomen were hesitant to return to the Dunsward out of shame and fear. By the time Choral the Conqueror swept north through what would become the kingdom of Brevoy in 4499 AR, the Nomen centaurs were marginalized and largely forgotten, and the region of the cairn was a remote wilderness area of little to no interest to the new civilization of the area.

This status quo has remained over the intervening years—until now, that is. When the swordlords of Restov sent agents south into the Stolen Lands, a new colony—Varnhold—was established at the edge of the old centaur rangelands, and along with these settlers came an ambitious treasure hunter named Willas Gundarson. Using Varnhold as a base of operations and following an ancient map copied from an even more ancient tablet recovered from deep Casmaron, Willas hoped to find a previously undiscovered hoard of ancient treasure. Unfortunately for Willas, he mistranslated the ancient tablet—and what he

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Kingdom in the Background

If you aren't using the kingdom-building rules and letting the PCs develop the Stolen Lands, you can assume that the nation of Narland continues to grow in the Greenbelt during this adventure. As this entire adventure takes place in the Nomen Heights, it's a simple matter to let the growing kingdom to the west settle into the background. By the end of the adventure, Narland has expanded east to the Tors, stretching from the Little Sellen's banks to the south up to the Shrike to the north.

had assumed was an indication of vast magical wealth was actually a warning of vast magical danger.

Armed with his mistranslated lore, Willas ranged far and wide while Varnhold was being established, operating under the guise of scouting to determine the lay of the land and identify any potential threats facing the fledgling colony. It was on one of these journeys that he discovered the site of Vordakai's Tomb and crossed the deep waters of the Little Sellen on a folding boat. On the island, he located wards designed to prevent intrusion and grasped something of their dire nature. He was about to turn back when he glimpsed a cache of treasure just a short way down the corridor leading into the tomb. Greed forced aside common sense, and he crept inside to investigate—but as he did, he felt the ancient warding alarms go off. Pausing only to snatch a single jade bracelet, he fled the tomb and retreated back across the river.

Though all remained quiet as he watched from the far shore, he knew he had triggered the guardian wards and had a bad feeling about what he had done. He hurried back to Varnhold with the bracelet and adjusted his tale to say he had found it on the river bank, hoping to hide his momentary lack of judgment. Unfortunately, Willas's fears were well founded, for the triggering of the wards awoke Vordakai from his age of slumber. Faced with a new world of wonder, the undead cyclops began to send his minions (loyal cyclopes who had been sealed in his crypt and now serve as undead thralls) out into the world to explore and bring back word of how the world had changed. Vordakai became particularly obsessed with the audacious human who had freed him, and upon noticing the theft of the jade bracelet, set about tracking the thief back to the settlement of Varnhold. Unleashing ancient cyclops magic, Vordakai emptied the settlement of its inhabitants in a single night of horror. Now, Vordakai studies the lore he has learned from Varnhold's vanishing and draws his plans to establish a new empire. With his kin gone from the region, the undead cyclops is confident that this time, his will be a lasting rule.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The player characters are contacted by an envoy from Restov and apprised of the loss of contact with the colony of Varnhold. The swordlords request that the PCs look into the situation and salvage the colony if possible, believing political revolutionaries may be involved. Traveling to Varnhold, the PCs find the settlement empty of settlers but eerily intact. Other than a few spriggan squatters and assorted vermin, none of which accounts for the disappearance of the settlement's population, there are no clues as to the fate of the colonists other than a single word scribbled on a doorjamb—"Nomen."

A bit of research in the village puts the PCs on the trail of the Nomen centaur tribe of the eastern hills, probably believing that the vanishing was the result of a centaur raid prompted by the theft of a piece of centaur jewelry. Traveling into Nomen-claimed lands, the PCs discover many of the fauna—hostile and otherwise—that are native to the area. During this time, they come under magical surveillance by the lich Vordakai. They run afoul of a small centaur war party and are ambushed by a soul eater, a foul outsider summoned by Vordakai to stop them from meddling in his affairs. This development suggests that something other than a centaur raid is behind the Varnhold vanishing.

Finally, the PCs make peaceful contact with the Nomen tribe and learn the truth of Varnhold's fate. Following the directions given by the centaurs, the PCs find Vordakai's Island and must infiltrate past the ancient wards, traps, and undead guardians in order to rescue the Varnhold survivors from the clutches of the foul lich.

PART ONE: EXPLORING THE NOMEN HEIGHTS

This adventure begins as the PCs hear of a mysterious loss of communication between the village of Varnhold to the east and the rest of the world. The PCs should already know that Varnhold was established at about the same time they established their own kingdom and capital city—the agents sent into the Nomen Heights by Brevoy consisted of a group of mercenaries led by a man named Maegar Varn. If you have the chance, you might wish to engineer some sort of link between the PCs and Varnhold. Perhaps a magic item or rare tome they seek for some reason cannot be found in their own nation, but their contacts assure them that the item they seek is held by an ally in Varnhold. A messenger sent to Varnhold might return with news that the item in question is being prepared for transportation to the PCs, but when the item doesn't arrive and all attempts to make contact with Varnhold fail, the PCs might be compelled to seek out their sister city to the east to investigate.

Alternatively, you can begin the adventure by having Edrist Hanvaki (see inside back cover) approach the PCs with worries that his brother Tomin, who was recently visiting friends in Varnhold, is several days overdue from returning. Obviously, all attempts to establish contact with Varnhold should fail—in this case, Edrist begs the PCs as leaders of the nation to investigate. If the PCs send a group of soldiers to look into the mystery, you can have them vanish as well, until the PCs themselves feel compelled to investigate the situation in person.

If neither of these methods work, you can simply have the PCs be contacted by a woman named Jamandi Aldori. One of Restov's most famous practitioners of the Aldori school of dueling, Jamandi had hoped that Varnhold would develop into a good site to found a new dueling school. But when she loses contact with Maegar, she begins to worry that something dire may have happened. Worse, northern Brevoy has become quite concerned with Rostland's interests in the Stolen Lands, and the political climate in Restov has become dangerously tense—at this point, any perceived interest in the Stolen Lands could well be interpreted by Issia as proof that Rostland is attempting to increase its holdings in preparation for civil war. As a result, Restov's government is increasingly forced to disavow any contact or alliance with its agents to the south. At the same time, the government is reallocating its defensive forces to the north to strengthen its border with Issia—should it come to civil war, Rostland does not want to be caught off guard. All of which puts Jamandi in a rough situation—she wants desperately to learn what has become of Varnhold, but cannot act directly without triggering a conflict. And so she reaches out to the PCs, as the leaders of the closest colony to Varnhold, to investigate, sending a somewhat cryptic message via runner. This message is reproduced at the start of this adventure on page 6.

VARNHOLD LORE

If the PCs wish to learn more about Varnhold, a DC 10 Knowledge (local or geography) recalls that Varnhold was established by a group of mercenaries led by Maegar Varn and that his band was called the Varnling Host. Like the PCs, they were one of the initial groups selected to colonize the Stolen Lands. A quick investigation of their colony's various points of contact with other nations confirms that no new communications have come from Varnhold in the last 2 weeks.

A DC 15 Knowledge (nobility) check recalls that Maegar Varn is the third son of Androth Varn, a Brevic baron of Issian descent. As such, he does not stand to inherit his father's title and holdings, and the opportunity to found a colony offered by the swordlords is likely his best chance to make his fortune. Maegar has no particular

Building a Kingdom

Although the events in “The Varnhold Vanishing” are certainly serious, they're not on a timer. The prisoners Vordakai has taken from Varnhold are either already beyond aid or able to wait for rescue for some time, so as a result, you should let the PCs set the pace of the adventure. Depending on the size of their kingdom, you might even wish to let them take a year or two to expand their nation until it reaches a respectable size of 50–60 hexes or so (perhaps even extending into the Nomen heights to the west of the Tors of Levenies) before beginning this adventure. Remember that once a kingdom reaches a size of 81, its rulers become Kings. This event should coincide with the next adventure, if possible—so if you can time things so that the PCs are finishing “The Varnhold Vanishing” with a nation that comprises 75 to 80 hexes, that'd be perfect.

loyalty to Brevoy but also has nothing to gain from openly rebelling against it—so it seems unlikely that this lapse of communication is intentional.

EXPLORING THE NOMEN HEIGHTS

Let the PCs set their own pace as they travel to Varnhold. They might stop to explore hexes as they go, or they could race to the colony to investigate it. Part Two of this adventure details the village of Varnhold, what happened there, and how the PCs might reach it. The remainder of Part Two details the majority of the other encounter sites awaiting discovery during the course of the adventure.

All of the fixed encounter locations in “The Varnhold Vanishing” are categorized into one of three categories: landmark, standard, or hidden.

Landmark Site: The site is automatically discovered as soon as the PCs enter the hex containing the site.

Standard Site: Unless the PCs are traveling specifically to that site, they do not encounter the site until they explore the hex, in which case they encounter the site automatically.

Hidden Site: If the PCs don't already know about the site's location, they need to make a skill check (the skill and DC required varies with the type of site) to locate it during exploration.

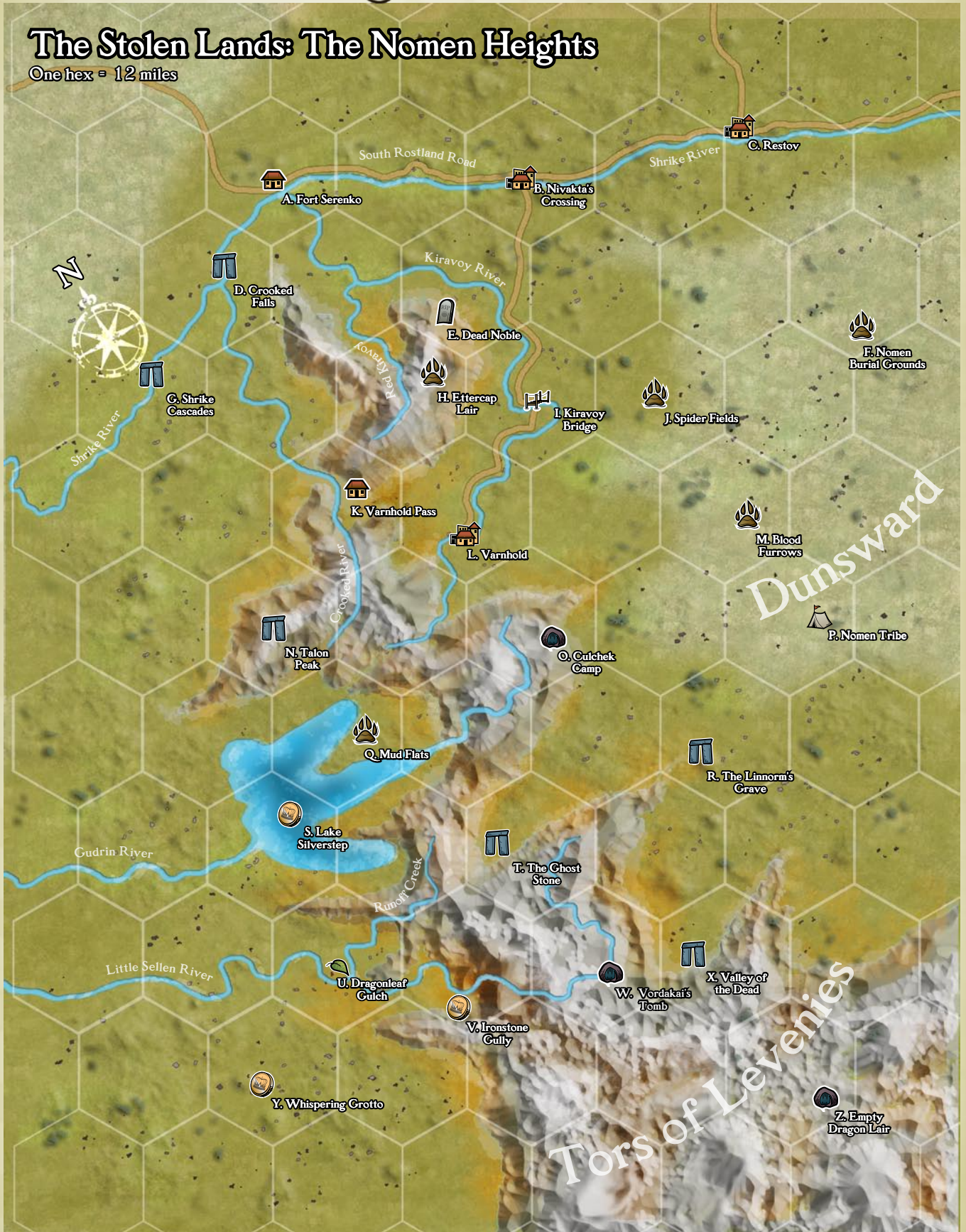
WANDERING MONSTERS

As the PCs explore the Nomen Heights, you can liven things up with wandering monsters generated from the table on page 77 of this book. There's a 5% chance of an encounter occurring each time the PCs enter an unclaimed hex, and a 15% chance per day or night spent exploring or camping in an unclaimed hex. These chances decrease to 1% when entering a claimed hex and 5% per day spent exploring or camping in a claimed hex. Take care not to overwhelm the

Kingmaker Part 3 of 6

The Stolen Lands: The Nomen Heights

One hex = 12 miles



The Varnhold Vanishing

Map Icons



Bridge



Camp



Dead Body



Hut



Lair



Landmark



Monster



Plant



Resource



Ruin



Structure



Trap



Town

PCs with random encounters, though; it's usually good to limit wandering monster encounters to only once per day.

QUESTS

The PCs will be gathering numerous quest opportunities as this adventure unfolds. Eight of these appear on the inside covers of this book, and several more are seeded throughout the rest of the adventure.

All of the Nomen Heights Quests presented in this book are worth 4,800 XP when they are completed—this is in addition to any experience points the PCs might earn while attempting to complete the quest.

EXPANDING THE KINGDOM

With Maegar Varn gone, along with his mercenaries, and the village of Varnhold now up for the taking, the PCs can expand their kingdom's holdings into this region of the Stolen Lands. With their attention diverted to the north, Rostland won't really notice or react to the PCs' kingdom expanding into the Nomen Heights unless the PCs have the audacity to attempt to claim a border hex (any of the hexes along the top row that contains areas A–C, and any land to the northeast of this row). A DC 10 Knowledge (history or nobility) check is all that's needed to realize that claiming territory in this row is essentially declaring war on Brevoy—a move that could drastically change the nature and focus of the Kingmaker Adventure Path.

If PCs insist on expanding their territory into this upper row of hexes, Rostland's relations with the PCs swiftly grow hostile. The increased international tension results in the PCs' kingdom automatically gaining 1 Unrest at the start of each Upkeep phase. In addition, as long as the PCs maintain control over any of these hexes, they'll have to contend with Rostlandic partisans during each Event phase (this does not replace any normally occurring events during this phase). Each phase, the PCs' kingdom must make a Stability check against the kingdom's Command DC; otherwise the partisans cause 1d4 BP of damage to the kingdom's infrastructure.

An attempt to claim the village of Nivakta's Crossing or, even more audaciously, the city of Restov automatically fails and puts the PCs' kingdom at war with Brevoy. Consult *Pathfinder Adventure Path* #35 in this event for

rules on how to handle mass combat—if you don't have access to this volume, you can simulate the effects of the war on the PCs' nation by increasing Unrest by 2d4 each Upkeep phase. Ultimately, war with Brevoy is beyond the scope of the Kingmaker Adventure Path, and if your PCs insist on taking their kingdom down this path, you'll need to create further developments to the campaign's storyline on your own.

A. FORT SERENKO (STANDARD)

This wooden fortification has stood for years on the southern border of Brevoy, but with the growing tensions between Rostland and Issia, the soldiers and scouts stationed here have been recalled to Restov. The fort itself is abandoned—an examination of the fort reveals evidence that it was abandoned in a swift but orderly manner.

B. NIVAKTA'S CROSSING (LANDMARK)

The southernmost village in Rostland, Nivakta's Crossing, is an alert town of tradesmen, hunters, fishermen, and trappers. The village itself is surrounded by a wooden palisade and is set on the northeastern bank of the Shrike River. A low bridge allows access over the river here to the wilderness to the south—the southwestern side of the bridge being fortified by well-manned guard towers.

The people of Nivakta's Crossing are sturdy, down to earth, and possess stunted senses of humor. Serious to a fault, they are somewhat suspicious of visitors from what they call "the South," but they're willing to take the PCs' coin for trade nonetheless. This is the point at which Maegar Varn and his mercenaries crossed the Shrike to head into the Nomen Heights some time ago, and it is an excellent place for the PCs to rest, shop for minor bits of equipment, or gather rumors on the region.

NIVAKTA'S CROSSING

CN Village

Corruption –1; **Crime** +0; **Economy** +0; **Law** –1; **Lore** +1;
Society –2

Qualities Rumormongering Citizens, Strategic Location

Danger +0

POPULACE

Government autocracy

Population 140 (110 humans, 15 gnomes, 10 dwarves, 5 others)

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Notable NPCs

- Lord Mayor Irven Revanisu** (CN male human aristocrat 2)
- Sheriff Lorin Kaven** (N male human ranger 2)
- Abbot Kara Ilarenika** (N female human cleric of Pharasma 6)

MARKETPLACE

Base Value 550 gp; **Purchase Limit** 2,500 gp; **Spellcasting** 3rd level spells

Minor Items *potion of cure moderate wounds*, *potion of haste*, *stone salve* (1 dose), *wand of shield* (44 charges);

Medium Items +1 *full plate*, *ring of protection* +2, *scroll of break enchantment*

C. RESTOV (LANDMARK)

The large city of Restov is located at the southern edge of Rostland. It's the cultural center of southern Brevoy and the birthplace of the world-famous Aldori dueling style. Restov is an excellent place for the PCs to visit if they need to sell off expensive items or want to shop for the same, but their own cities haven't quite matured to a point where this is an option. The citizens and government of this city grow increasingly concerned with their neighbors to the north in Issia as this adventure continues, and assuming the PCs don't encroach politically upon their lands, Restov is likely to play a minor role (if any) in this adventure.

Additional details on Restov can be found in *Pathfinder Adventure Path* #31.

RESTOV

CN Large City

Corruption +2; **Crime** -1; **Economy** +5; **Law** +4; **Lore** +4; **Society** +3

Qualities Prosperous, Rumormongering Citizens, Strategic Location, Superstitious, Tourist Attraction

Danger 10

POPULACE

Government autocracy

Population 18,670 (15,240 humans, 1,220 dwarves, 950 gnomes, 820 halflings, 240 half-elves, 130 elves, 70 other)

Notable NPCs

- Lord Mayor Ioseph Sellemius** (NG male human aristocrat 3/expert 2)
- Swordlord Jamandi Aldori** (CG female half-elf fighter 14)
- High Priest Ezvanki Keegh** (N male human cleric of Erastil 10)

MARKETPLACE

Base Value 12,800 gp; **Purchase Limit** 75,000 gp; **Spellcasting** 5th level spells

Minor Items +1 *chainmail*, +1 *keen battleaxe*, +2 *greatsword*, *clear spindle ioun stone*, *cloak of the manta ray*, *scroll of fireball*, *scroll of identify*, *scroll of mirror image*, *scroll of stinking cloud*, *wand of cure moderate wounds* (CL 10th, 47 charges), *wand of magic missile* (CL 9th, 33 charges); **Medium Items** *lesser rod of maximize metamagic*, *ring of improved jumping*, *ring of improved swimming*, *ring of major cold resistance*, *scroll of raise dead*, *trident of warning*,

wand of gust of wind (44 charges), *wand of restoration* (29 charges); **Major Items** +5 *light steel shield*, +5 *defending aldori dueling sword*, *belt of incredible dexterity* +6, *rod of splendor*, *staff of fire*

D. CROOKED FALLS (LANDMARK)

The Shrike River cascades over a series of waterfalls here, each of which drops down 10 to 30 feet. There are five cascades in all over the course of a mile—the Crooked River tributary flows into the Shrike at approximately the midpoint of the series of waterfalls. These cascades (and the larger Shrike Cascade at area G) make the Shrike River a poor choice for trade between Brevoy and the south—all river trade normally flows along the East Sellen through Hooktongue Slough to the west (although lately, even this route has been unavailable for various reasons—see *Pathfinder Adventure Path* #34 for details).

It's a DC 20 Climb check to scale the banks of these waterfalls.

E. DEAD NOBLE (HIDDEN)

The body of an unfortunate and foolish man named Tomin Hanvaki, the eldest son of a minor aristocrat who lives in one of the PCs' cities, lies dead in a shallow gulch in the foothills here. He had hoped to make it to Varnhold to seal a business deal with that village's gemcutter, but in his haste to make good time he slipped and fell into this gulch, breaking his fool neck in the process. A DC 12 Survival check is enough to note the wheeling buzzards in the sky above, but actually finding the body in requires a DC 15 Perception check (with a +4 bonus on the roll if the searchers have noticed the buzzards).

Treasure: Tomin still wears a mother of pearl brooch worth 100 gp, the same brooch his brother Edrist (see the inside back cover of this book) might ask the PCs to recover.

F. NOMEN BURIAL MOUNDS (CR 8; STANDARD)

A number of 8-foot-high mounds of loose stone, arranged in a strange spiraling pattern with each mound connected to the ones to the left and right by a 3-foot high wall of stones, are located here. A DC 20 Knowledge (local) check identifies the strange collection of 29 mounds as the burial site of a tribe of Iobarian centaurs—if the check exceeds the DC by 10, the placement of stones and shape of the mounds further identifies the spiral of mounds as a Nomen tribe burial site.

Creatures: A trio of manticores has recently claimed this area as its territory. These manticores spot the party unless the PCs have managed to beat their Perception checks with opposed Stealth checks. The manticores hide behind the mounds and use their Stealth to try and wait unseen until the PCs come within range of their tail spike attacks. They

then unleash these attacks before going airborne to make swooping Flyby Attacks. If two are killed, the third one flees.

MANTICORES (3) CR 5

XP 1,600

hp 57 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 199)

G. SHRIKE CASCADE (LANDMARK)

Unlike Crooked Falls, the Shrike Cascade is a single waterfall. The river plummets 50 feet over a cliff here, rendering the Shrike unnavigable to river traffic—although the vista of the waterfall itself is quite breathtaking.

It's a DC 20 Climb check to scale the cliff side along the waterfall's edge.

H. ETTERCAP LAIR (CR 8, STANDARD)

A massive web hangs suspended between two crags on the mountainside here. The web is 30 feet wide and hangs above a 50-foot-deep chasm, the walls of which are riddled with shallow caves. The web itself is not sticky and appears to be a sort of exotic rope bridge across the chasm. The far side of the web bridge is a single ledge that goes nowhere; upon it lies a long-dead dwarf and a glowing warhammer.

Creatures: This whole area is a relatively obvious ambush created by a group of particularly pathetic and unimaginative ettercaps. The six ettercaps lurk in the shallow caves below, watching and waiting for food to be lured out onto the web bridge. Unfortunately for the ettercaps, the out-of-the-way location of their lair means that few travelers come out this far, and of those who do, even fewer are willing to be lured out onto what is obviously a giant spider web. The ettercaps are relatively dull-witted, but they're not dumb enough to avoid becoming frustrated with the fact that what they think is a great trap hasn't secured them more food.

In fact, the ettercaps are so eager to both secure food and finally try out their trap that they jump the gun, triggering the trap as soon as the first PC sets foot on the web bridge rather than waiting and hopefully getting more PCs onto the bridge. When the ettercaps trigger the trap, the anchor points for the web bridge give way and drop the web into the chasm below; any creatures on the bridge immediately fall 50 feet and take appropriate falling damage. Anyone within 5 feet of either side (as is the case for the PCs when the impatient ettercaps trigger the trap) can attempt a DC 15 Reflex save to leap back to safety.

If no PCs fall victim to the ettercaps' trap, the ettercaps immediately fall into a bitter, bickering fight among themselves. In this case, they spend 1d3 rounds fighting among themselves (or until the PCs attack one of them directly) before they realize that the real enemy (and dinner) is above.

ETTERCAPS (4) CR 3

XP 800 each

hp 30 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 129)

Treasure: Amid the clutter of bones and dried husks in the caves is a web-shrouded chest holding 435 gp and 1,080 cp. The dead dwarf on the far ledge still clutches his softly glowing +2 warhammer.

I. KIRAVOY BRIDGE (LANDMARK)

This simple wooden bridge is a new construction, recently built by the settlers of Varnhold. The bridge itself is sturdy and well-constructed, but it doesn't show much evidence of use—it was finished only recently.

Additionally, this hex has already been developed as farmlands by Varnhold—if the PCs claim this hex as part of their nation, they automatically gain the benefits of these farmlands.

J. SPIDER FIELDS (CR 7; STANDARD)

Creatures: In exploring the Greenbelt, the PCs may have encountered a giant trap door spider. The borderland between the Dunsward and the Tors of Levenies is infested with such creatures—hairy black and red monsters the size of ponies. The fields here appear strangely barren and are covered with numerous low hummocks of grassy mounds—several of which are in fact the doors to spider lairs. In all, there are six spiders in this area—a Perception check against a spider's Stealth +13 allows the PCs to notice them before all six spiders attack. These spiders lack an offensive web-spinning ability and the bonus on Acrobatics checks most hunting spiders have, but they do have Spring Attack as a bonus feat. As long as it is within its pit-shaped trap, a giant trapdoor spider has cover.

GIANT TRAPDOOR SPIDERS (6) CR 2

XP 600 each

Advanced giant spider (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 258, 294)

AC 18, touch 17, flat-footed 15

hp 22 each

Treasure: Each of the spiders' pits has a scattering of coins, gems, and jewelry worth 200 gp. One pit also contains a partially eaten human that still wears its *cloak of elvenkind* and *boots of elvenkind*.

K. VARNHOLD PASS (LANDMARK)

The rugged Tors of Levenies dip low here, creating a natural pass from the east to the west. The Crooked River flows down to the west, cascading out of the mountains just under the pass's highest elevation of 200 feet, leaving 150-foot-high sheer cliffs to the north and south. A single stone watchtower sits at the top of the pass. It is currently

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abandoned, albeit with no signs of struggle within. Anyone who climbs to the top of the 30-foot-tall tower can see the village of Varnhold to the southeast on a clear day.

The building counts as a watchtower if a city is built in this area.

L. VARNHOLD (LANDMARK)

This area is detailed in Part Two.

M. BLOOD FURROWS (CR 8; STANDARD)

Creatures: A number of strange furrows scar the grass in this area, disrupted here and there by sinkhole-like depressions and mounds of earth and soil. This region is the territory of a single, cantankerous bulette that the Nomen have named Kankerata (“world chewer” or “earth eater”). Kankerata has dominated this region for decades, contrary to the typical behavior pattern of bulettes (normally, these beasts move on to find new territories once they’ve hunted their current one out). By now, it has almost become a part of the Dunsward’s landscape. The centaurs are fond of daring each other to race through Kankerata’s network of drifts and nests—they view this feat as a test of bravery and often use it to settle disputes.

It’s a DC 22 Knowledge (arcana) or Survival check to correctly identify the drifts and furrows as evidence of bulette activity. Kankerata is observant and swift, and quickly moves to attack anyone who loiters for long in the region.

KANKERATA

CR 8

XP 4,800

Advanced bulette (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 39, 294)

hp 100

N. TALON PEAK (CR 9; LANDMARK)

Creature: A crumbling tower stands atop a low mountain here. Known locally as Talon Peak because the jagged ruins of the tower look almost like a sharp claw protruding from the peak of the steep mountain, this location has been the nesting ground of a roc for many years. A DC 20 Knowledge (nature or local) check is enough to have heard the stories of the “giant black bird” that hunts in and haunts the skies above this region and the six hexes that surround it.

The roc itself is indeed a midnight black specimen. The winged predator once lived in the western Stolen Lands in the Branthlend Mountains, but when her mate was killed by the black dragon Ilthuliak (see *Pathfinder Adventure Path* #36), she relocated to this nesting site in the Tors of Levenies. One day she may well migrate to another region if the urge to find a new mate takes her, but for now the beast is content hunting and feeding here.

It’s a DC 25 Climb check to scale the sheer walls of the 250-foot-tall peak. The roc’s nest is located in the shell of the partially collapsed tower (which a DC 20 Knowledge [history] check identifies as being of elven make). When the PCs arrive, there’s a 40% chance the roc is present (in which case it attacks ferociously to defend its nest); otherwise the roc is hunting and its nest (and the 1d3+2 eggs within) is undefended.

While the roc’s eggs are unfertilized, the PCs may be seeking them for a quest (see the inside back cover). A roc’s egg is sizable, measuring 4 feet in diameter and weighing 200 pounds. Transporting an egg off the mountain should be an adventure in and of itself, especially if the PCs take too long and the roc returns before they finish their task.

ROC

CR 9

XP 4,800

hp 120 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 236)

O. CULCHEK CAVE (HIDDEN)

Once the lair of the Culcheck spriggans (the tribe that is currently squatting in the village of Varnhold), this cave is currently abandoned. The entrance remains difficult to find, hidden as it is behind an upthrust spur of rock and concealing brush (DC 20 Perception check to notice while exploring the hex), but the 15-room complex is now completely empty—the spriggans took everything of value when they moved into Varnhold and destroyed anything that was left behind.

P. NOMEN TRIBE (STANDARD)

This area is detailed in Part Three.

Q. MUD FLATS (CR 9; STANDARD)

This 3-mile-long, 1,500-foot-wide swath of lakeshore is a stretch of bubbling mud, heated by geothermal activity. The air is thick and muggy. Even though the majority of the mud lies in a low basin shielded from nearby Lake Silverstep by a mere ridge of rock, silt from the mud rarely seeps into the clear waters of the lake. The mud itself is very mineral rich and could be of some value to the Varnhold colony as an export. Unfortunately, it is not guarded.

The mud flats are considered to be a shallow bog for movement purposes and skill checks (see page 427 of the *Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook*).

Creatures: These mud flats are home to a pack of 12 strange creatures known as mudmen. These sloppy, filthy elementals have lurked in the mud here for ages, likely left behind from an ancient elven experiment conducted along the shores of the lake, involving the boundaries between the Planes of Earth and Water. Mudmen appear as stocky humanoids composed entirely of mud and bits of debris;

The Varnhold Vanishing

their faces flow and drip, never quite keeping exact visages or expressions.

MUDMEN (12)

CR 2

XP 600 each

Tome of Horrors Revised 272

N Medium outsider (earth, elemental, extraplanar, water)

Init +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense; Perception +0

DEFENSE

AC 13, touch 10, flat-footed 13 (+3 natural)

hp 19 each (2d10+8)

Fort +4, **Ref** +0, **Will** +0

DR 5/magic; **Immune** elemental traits, mind-affecting effects

Weaknesses magic vulnerability

OFFENSE

Speed 10 ft.

Melee 2 slams +4 (1d4+2)

Ranged mud bomb +2 touch (1d4 Dexterity damage)

Special Attacks engulf

STATISTICS

Str 15, **Dex** 10, **Con** 19, **Int** —, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +2; **CMB** +4 (+8 grapple when engulfing); **CMD** 14

Skills Stealth +0 (+16 in mud)

SQ mud pool

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Engulf (Su) Once per minute as a standard action, a mudman can hurl itself at any creature of its size or smaller within 10 feet. If it succeeds on a ranged touch attack, the mudman immediately makes a CMB check to grapple the target (this does not provoke an attack of opportunity) with a +4 racial bonus. If the mudman fails to establish a hold, it drops into an adjacent square and is staggered for 1 round. If the mudman establishes a hold, it flows over its opponent, covering the creature with its muddy body—it can attempt a new CMB check to maintain the “hold” on the creature each round that follows as a free action. The creature is effectively blinded and must either hold its breath or suffocate as long as the mudman retains its hold. Each round the mudman maintains its hold, it deals 1d4+3 points of damage as it crushes and constricts its victims.

Magic Vulnerability (Ex) Mudmen are particularly susceptible to *dispel magic*, as this spell disrupts the magical energies in their bodies. A mudman subjected to *dispel magic* takes 1d6 points of damage per caster level (Fortitude save for half damage). *Transmute mud to rock*

deals 1d6 points of damage per caster level to any mudmen caught in the area of effect and leaves them staggered until they can find a new mud pool. Other, similar spells may have similar effects.

Mud Bomb (Su) A mudman can hurl globs of its muddy body mixed with its surrounding mud—this attack has a range increment of 10 feet. If one of these mud bombs hits a target, it quickly grows semi-solid and tenacious, causing 1d4 points of Dexterity damage. If the cumulative Dexterity damage from mud bombs ever equals the target’s actual Dexterity score, the target remains conscious but is held immobile and cannot take any physical action (although see below) until the mud is removed or the target breaks free. Spell-like abilities or spells with only verbal components may be used if the trapped creature can make a DC 20 concentration check. It’s a DC 20 Strength check (made as a full-round action) to pry accumulated mud off and remove all Dexterity damage caused by the attack—a creature that is held immobile can break free with a DC 25 Strength check

Mudman



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made as a full-round action (this is the only physical action the creature can attempt while encased in mud). The mud dries and crumbles to dust in 15 minutes, or in 1d3 rounds if a large amount of water (such as results from a casting of *create water*) is used to wash it away.

Mud Pool (Su) A mudman cannot leave the bounds of the mud pool it dwells in, although these mud pools may be of any size. A mudman's tremorsense extends throughout the entire mud pool, and it gains a +16 bonus on Stealth checks when hiding in a mud pool. A mudman forced out of its mud pool is staggered.

Treasure: Hidden within these creatures' mud pool (DC 28 Perception check to find) is a well-preserved corpse, mummified by the thick mud. It wears the trappings of a Taldan Captain-General of Horse from 2 centuries ago and has a satchel in which can be found a carefully wrapped platinum idol depicting a grinning skull-like figure worth 1,000 gp. Who this mysterious warrior was and what may have brought him and his prize to this distant frontier remain a mystery.

R. LINNORM'S GRAVE (CR 9; LANDMARK)

The massive bones of a long-dead crag linnorm of incredible size lie upon a hilltop here; the bleached white ribs protrude up into the air like strange trees and the moss-draped skull provides nesting grounds for dozens of families of shrikes. The Nomen centaurs revere this site as holy, often making trips to the bones to leave offerings of meat and wine before the immense skull under the belief that keeping the linnorm's spirit happy prevents its ghost from returning to this world.

Creatures: Isolated herds of mastodons graze in the hills and valleys of this area. Typically, a herd of mastodons numbers about 15, but only one bull in each herd is aggressive enough to attack those who get too close. The Nomen centaurs and many other denizens of the area often hunt mastodons for food.

BULL MASTODON

CR 9

XP 6,400

hp 133 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 128)

S. LAKE SILVERSTEP (LANDMARK)

Lake Silverstep, so named for the legend that its waters filled the footprint of a great silver wyrm many ages ago, is the cleanest and clearest source of water in the Stolen Lands. Its primary source is from the Gurdin River, but countless smaller rills and streams empty from the mountains in dramatic cascades along the lake's eastern shores. With the exception of the mud flats (area Q), the shores surrounding the lake consist of idyllic swaths of

nettles, cattails, reeds, and lilies and are home to numerous nixies, grigs, and faerie dragons. These fey are incredibly bashful and shy, and it's unlikely that any of them will be brave enough to make contact with the PCs—though stats for these creatures can be found in *Pathfinder Adventure Path* #31 and #32 if such contact is established.

The waters of Lake Silverstep host an enormous variety of fish; the most common are small, thick-bodied silver eels—quite delicious and much sought after by gourmet chefs. The fact that dangerous predators often hunt along the shores of the lake, combined with the fact that silver eels are difficult to catch due to their uncanny ability to sense hooks in bait, together ensure that demand for the eels remains high. It's a DC 30 Survival check to catch 1d6 silver eels over the course of an 8-hour expedition, but baiting the hooks with *goodberries*, for some reason, seems to help immensely—fishing with *goodberries* as bait grants a +10 bonus on the Survival check to catch eels. Although the lake encompasses numerous hexes, only this particular hex counts as a resource hex if claimed by a kingdom.

T. THE GHOST STONE (CR 10; STANDARD)

A strange, gray stone monolith, its sides polished and smooth, stands at the western end of a valley here. The stone is known by locals as the Ghost Stone, for at night, the air surrounding the stone within a 120-foot radius glows with a soft radiance, and strange, ghostly shapes of unnatural shape and posture flit and writhe through the air. The Ghost Stone itself is a spire-like structure with a dull point that stands 15 feet high, an ancient elven relic, abandoned and forgotten. It once served as the foundation for a portal to the Ethereal Plane, but today it serves only to make the boundary between this world and the next unnaturally thin. On the Ethereal Plane, the area glows with a strange bright radiance and the Ghost Stone itself sits as a stationary, solid curiosity that often attracts natives of that realm. Recently, this attraction has caused something of a minor territorial war.

Creatures: At some point before the PCs actually reach sight of the Ghost Stone, a phase spider approaches them, seeking their help. Named Zzamas, the phase spider speaks very few words of Common and knows that most humanoids find her shape unsettling. As a result, she tries to make contact with the PCs by speaking to them from hiding, calling out in a strange buzzing voice, "You help me, yes?"

Zzamas's crude Common and hideous shape might encourage some PCs to attack, but if a group establishes communication (an easier task if a PC can speak Aklo), Zzamas explains that several xills have forced her from her home, and she wants the PCs' help to kill them. She

promises a “fancy chest with stuff inside,” as payment for their help.

The Ghost Stone has indeed been claimed by a group of xills—four of them, in fact. If the PCs agree to help Zzamas, the phase spider aids them in the fight; otherwise, if the PCs enter the area of influence of the Ghost Stone, they will need to fight against the four otherplanar horrors themselves. The xills find the Ghost Stone’s aura to be somewhat intoxicating, and all four are effectively sickened as a result of this effect.

ZZAMAS CR 5

XP 1,600

Phase spider (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 226)

hp 57

DRUNKEN XILLS (5) CR 5

XP 2,400

Sickened xills (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 283)

hp 67 each

U. DRAGONLEAF GULCH (CR 10; STANDARD)

The Little Sellen River narrows here as it passes through a gully between two rocky hillsides, flowing around an oblong island thick with vegetation. This island is only 15 feet wide and 75 feet long; the river narrows down to a width of 15 feet to either side of it. The cliff walls of the gully are 40 feet high and can be scaled with a DC 15 Climb check.

Creature: Lurking amid the thick reeds, nettles, and blackberries that grow on the island is a single giant flytrap. The man-eating plant moves quickly to attack anything sizable that moves along the river; the confines of the surrounding gully allow the plant to snap and grab at targets on either side of the island, including those that cling to the cliff walls within 10 feet of the river surface.

GIANT FLYTRAP

XP 9,600

hp 149 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 134)

Treasure: A search of the island and a successful DC 25 Perception check reveals a large amount of bones—evidence of the flytrap’s victims. Most of the bones are from centaurs or humans. Scattered among the bones is a bit of treasure: 320 sp, 345 gp, 13 pp, a masterwork bastard sword in an elegant darkwood scabbard worth

Quest: The Ghost Stone War

Help Zzamas drive off the xills who have claimed the Ghost Stone as their territory.

Source: Zzamas the phase spider (area T).

Task: Zzamas wants the PCs to help her attack and slay the xills that have forced her to abandon her lair at the Ghost Stone.

Completion: All xills must be slain or forced to flee.

Reward: Zzamas promises to reward the PCs, if they help her, with a lost *secret chest* she recently found drifting forgotten through the Ether. The chest itself is worth 5,000 gp, remains functional as the focus for a *secret chest* spell, and is locked (DC 35 Disable Device to pick the lock). The wizard the chest once belonged to is long dead, but the *wand of dimension door* (22 charges) and the spellbook it contains are still quite useful. The spellbook itself should be filled with a number of spells that are useful to the party’s wizards (6 each of levels 1–5)—otherwise, it can be sold for 2,475 gp.

150 gp, a *lesser silent metamagic rod*, and a *helm of comprehending languages and reading magic*.

V. IRONSTONE GULLY (HIDDEN)

Just west of the Little Sellen, a shallow cave extends into the mountainside. While to the untrained eye this cave (which currently serves as the lair of a harmless flock of bats) might seem unremarkable, a DC 20 Appraise



Zzamas

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check reveals the truth—the far wall of the cave bears an incredibly rich vein of iron ore that could be a valuable resource for any kingdom that claims this hex.

W. VORDAKAI'S TOMB (STANDARD)

This area is detailed in Part Four.

X. VALLEY OF THE DEAD (CR 6; STANDARD)

The entrance to this wide valley is marked by a series of posts decorated with bones and skulls every 50 to 60 feet—a wall of warnings erected by the Nomen that runs for the entire 6-mile opening to the valley. The Nomens call the lands beyond this valley “Olah-Kakanket”—the Valley of the Dead.

Beyond the warning wall of bone totems, the valley doesn't seem much different than the surrounding foothills. Yet the further one travels toward the mountains, the more a strange feeling of oppression grows; the wind

seems oddly muted as it flows through the trees and grass, the birds and insects grow quiet, and the unusually regular crags along the surrounding mountains seem almost to crouch in expectation of the PCs' approach.

A mile past the bone totems, the first of the gravestones appears. These 6- to 10-foot-tall stone steles are badly weathered—many are partially or wholly collapsed, but each bears strange runes that a DC 25 Linguistics check can identify as being written in Cyclops and listing ancient names. There are thousands of gravestones within the valley of the dead, but the cyclops bodies beneath them have long since decayed into soil—all that remains are fragments of bones.

At the farthest western point in the valley, where the ragged Tors of Levenies rise 300 feet above the surrounding foothills, a crack in the cliff wall allows a 15-foot-wide stone stairway to wind up into the mountains. This path takes a circuitous route, winding back and forth over a length of 8 miles through the tors until finally opening upon area W.

Creatures: A dark and ominous shape looms in the throat of the stairs where the shadows gather. This shape is a guardian creature sent to watch the approach to the crypt above at area W—a dread zombie cyclops.



Dread Zombie Cyclops

DREAD ZOMBIE CYCLOPS **CR 6**

XP 2,400
Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 52, Advanced Bestiary 105
 CE Large undead
Init -2; **Senses** low-light vision; **Perception** +19

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 7, flat-footed 19 (+2 armor, -2 Dex, +10 natural, -1 size)
hp 65 (10d8+20)
Fort +4, **Ref** +1, **Will** +8
Defensive Abilities channel resistance +2; **Immune** undead traits

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.
Melee mwk battleaxe +14/+9 (2d6+7/x3), slam +13 (1d8+7), bite +13 (1d6+7)
Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.
Special Attacks brain consumption, command zombies

TACTICS

During Combat Plagued by shattered, incomplete memories of an ancient cyclops empire and a constant, gnawing hunger for brains, the dread zombie cyclops lurches to roaring violence upon sighting any living intruder, attacking intruders on sight.

Morale The undead cyclops fights until destroyed.

STATISTICS

Str 25, **Dex** 6, **Con** —, **Int** 6, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 12
Base Atk +7; **CMB** +15; **CMD** 23
Feats Alertness, Cleave, Great Cleave, Improved Bull Rush,

Power Attack, Toughness

Skills Intimidate +9, Perception +19, Sense Motive +11, Survival +6

Languages Common, Cyclops, Giant

SQ flash of insight

Gear leather armor, battleaxe

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Brain Consumption (Ex) If a dread zombie cyclops deals damage with its bite attack against a helpless or pinned living foe, the bitten creature must make a DC 22 Fortitude save or be reduced to a negative hit point total equal to 1 lower than his current Constitution as the zombie begins to consume his brain. If the dread zombie bites a foe who is in negative hit points, he automatically kills the foe by eating his brain. The save DC is Strength-based.

Command Zombies (Su) A dread zombie cyclops can automatically command all normal zombies within 30 feet as a free action. Normal zombies never attack a dread zombie unless compelled.

Y. WHISPERING GROTTO (HIDDEN)

A DC 25 Perception check made while exploring this hex allows the PCs to notice a strange and somewhat unsettling sound, almost as if the whispering of a number of hidden conspirators were carried on the wind that blows through an otherwise unremarkable dale between two hills. A second DC 25 Perception check reveals numerous small holes in the ground and hillsides; as the wind blows over these narrow fissures, it generates the unsettling noise.

Anyone who peers into these small fissures is greeted by a shocking sight—a glittering tangle of crystals. The narrow caverns that riddle this area contain a sizable deposit of gemstones, providing an excellent economic resource for a kingdom that claims this hex as its own.

Z. EMPTY DRAGON LAIR (STANDARD)

Deep in the trackless reaches of the Tors of Levenies lies a large cave entrance. Within, a 50-foot-wide tunnel stretches 300 feet into the mountain before opening into a large, vaulted chamber 140 feet in diameter. Yet more impressive are the dry bones of an adult silver dragon that lie sprawled in the center of the cavern. The dragon's remains are not completely intact—the bones along the right arm and wing are strangely incomplete, as if they had been melted away by a powerful acid. No sign of the dragon's skull remains at all—or of the dragon's treasure. A DC 20 Perception check reveals a healthy scattering of silver and black dragon scales.

Rumors and legends of a silver dragon named Amvarean are obviously out of date—the black dragon Ilthuliak slew the younger silver dragon many years ago and stole her treasure. See *Pathfinder Adventure Path* #36 for details on this dangerous foe.

Quest: Fate of Varnhold

The PCs discover what happened to the villagers of Varnhold and take steps to ensure such a mass disappearance will not happen again.

Source: No one in particular assigns this quest to the PCs—but if they ignore the problems in Varnhold, they'll eventually face a new threat to the region once the lich Vordakai emerges in earnest.

Task: Explore Varnhold, learn the truth of what befell its citizens, and then confront the lich Vordakai in his tomb.

Completion: Slay Vordakai and release as many imprisoned villagers as possible from captivity in the lich's dungeon of souls (area **W28**).

Reward: With Vordakai's defeat and the captured villagers released from the dungeon of souls, Varnhold agrees to join the PCs' kingdom—see *Concluding the Adventure* for details.

PART TWO: THE VANISHED VILLAGE

With a DC 15 Knowledge (geography) check, the PCs can determine that the village of Varnhold was established in the central Nomen heights, in a wide valley between two low mountains of the Tors of Levenies. There are two established routes to Varnhold—one south from the Rostlandic village of Nivakta's Crossing, and one overland through the wilderness and a low spot in the Tors known as Varnhold Pass. Go ahead and mark the locations for Varnhold, Restov, Nivakta's Crossing, and Varnhold Pass on the PCs' blank map so they'll know where they're heading. How they get to Varnhold and what route they take is, of course, up to them.

VARNHOLD

Established by Maegar Varn and his auspiciously named group of loyal mercenaries, the Varnling Host, Varnhold had a population of well over a hundred just before its citizens vanished. Varnhold is a fledgling colony comprised primarily of single adults evenly distributed between craftsmen and farm laborers, though there are a number of married couples and even a few families with children.

Most of Varnhold's buildings are constructed of fieldstones up to a height of about 3 feet, with wooden planking and even some frame and stucco above that. The windows bear shutters and are unglazed unless otherwise noted. Roofs are uniformly shake shingles. A few dwellings, however, are still the sod dugouts constructed in the colony's earliest days. The primary buildings of the town are an inn, a church of Erastil,

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a town livery, a small brewery, and the local grange, where farmers can stockpile their produce for trade and sale. The town is constructed around a ford of the Kiravoy River, above which stands a low, flat-topped hill. Atop this hill stands the hewn-log stockade and blockhouse built for the colony's defense—the seat of Varnhold's lord governor, Maegar Varn.


THE DOOM THAT CAME TO VARNHOLD

When treasure-hunter Willas Gunderson came to Varnhold, he had visions not of colonization but of treasure in his mind, for he possessed an ancient map claiming to lead to a long-forgotten crypt in the mountains southwest of the new colony. Yet as detailed in the Adventure Background, when Willas finally found Vordakai's Crypt, the site promised on his map, he gained naught but a single jade bracelet before awakening an ancient evil. Eager to cover up his foolish brush with death, Willas adjusted his story and claimed he had found the jade bracelet abandoned on the banks of a small tributary river while scouting the Tors.

Lord Varn, being something of an amateur archaeologist and historian himself, took a great interest in the jade treasure Willas had returned with, but like Willas, mistook what is actually a large ring for a bracelet and tentatively identified its markings as associated with the Nomen centaurs, a tribe with which his colony was involved in a low-grade conflict. Believing the "bracelet" to be a prehistoric artifact of that culture, he sent word to an old colleague from Oppara—Ervil Pendrod, a scholar who specialized in Casmar antiquities. Maestro Pendrod was in the beginning stages of composing a sweeping epic opera dedicated to the millennia-sweeping history of the Iobarian steppes and gleefully accepted word of the artifact as evidence of a link between the Nomen centaurs and those of ancient Iobaria. He immediately set out for Varnhold to study this magnificent find and its provenance.

Yet Maestro Pendrod was not the only individual interested in the "bracelet," for with its theft and the activation of the tomb wards, the long-dead cyclops Vordakai had awakened. Turning his oracular powers to the recovery of the ring and the location of the thief, the lich located both in the settlement of Varnhold. Vordakai emerged from his crypt for the first time in thousands of years and made his way toward the village. One still evening soon thereafter, he used a potent artifact known as an *oculus of Abaddon* to create a haunting beckon from a hillock at the edge of town. The potent magic drifted throughout the town, calling forth all of the colonists in a daze, and by drawing upon ancient reserves of magic, Vordakai captured each of the villagers in *soul jars*. He left the village of Varnhold empty, its populace mysteriously vanished without a trace—and kept in his crypt as a source of information the ancient cyclops he now uses to educate himself upon what the world has become.

The Watcher



The lich Vordakai left his familiar, a raven named Horagnamon, to ply the skies above Varnhold and the surrounding lands. For several hours a day, Vordakai observes and explores the world he left behind so long ago by watching through his familiar's eyes. At some point during the adventure, likely as the PCs are exploring Varnhold and getting into flashy, noisy fights with the creatures that now dwell there, Horagnamon notices and swoops low to watch, following with interest as Vordakai observes the PCs through the raven's eyes. Horagnamon takes no special measure to avoid detection, relying upon the fact that a raven in Varnhold should be unremarkable—but is careful to always remain more than 100 feet away from the PCs to avoid accidental detection via effects like *detect evil*. Horagnamon may take specific acts against the PCs, as indicated in the text, and as the adventure goes on you should let the PCs know that they have a strange feeling, as if they're being watched. Award them a DC 25 Perception check each day. Any PC who makes two consecutive successful Perception checks can make a DC 20 Wisdom or wild empathy check to notice that a strange raven seems to be following them. If confronted, Horagnamon flees to the southwest—if the PCs manage to capture and interrogate the raven, Vordakai uses his link to the familiar to destroy it (and possibly harm anyone nearby—see page 52).

HORAGNAMON

Raven familiar (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 133)
hp 80

The empty village, meanwhile, has been taken over by a band of spriggans from the Culchek tribe.

L1. HOGKEEPER'S FARM (CR 4)

This structure, though fairly new, is poorly built. The clapboard walls have large gaps and its roof sags alarmingly. Behind the cottage sprawl a mud-filled enclosure and a covered shed. The smell of decay and filth emanating from this dwelling is horrendous.

This building was the home of a hogkeeper who hunted the surrounding hills for wild boars—some of which he planned to domesticate. The hogkeeper was a

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vile man of questionable hygiene and habit, ill-liked by his neighbors. His home is a shambles simply because of his personal habits.

Creature: Around the muddy pigpen are scattered the rotten, half-eaten corpses of a number of feral hogs, now covered in clouds of fat black flies. One wall of the pen has collapsed, allowing (in an ironic turn of events) a particularly massive feral hog (equal to a dire boar in size and ferocity) to enter and feed on the bodies of his starved kin. If he sees the PCs, he immediately charges, easily smashing through the poorly built split-rail fence as he does so (this barrier costs it 2 squares of movement).

GIANT FERAL BOAR	CR 4
XP 1,200	
Dire Boar (<i>Pathfinder RPG Bestiary</i> 36)	
hp 42	

L2. FARMHOUSES

Each of these small cottages is fairly well kept and modestly furnished with simple accoutrements. The cottages served as the dwellings for 1d6 villagers. All the homes show signs of having been derelict for several weeks, though they appear to have been abandoned in the midst of normal activities.



L3. TANNERY

The acrid stench of a tannery wafts faintly from this modest building. An outhouse stands across the yard in front of the building.

The village tanner lived and worked here. His combination home and shop is filled with hides in various stages of stretching and curing. Out back is a fenced enclosure with three horse hides stretched upon it. A DC 15 Perception or Knowledge (nature) check recognizes them as being strangely incomplete above the withers. A DC 23 Knowledge (nature) confirms that they are actually centaur hides missing the humanoid portion.

L4. BREWERY

This large, two-story building partially overhangs the river bank. A wagon sits at the loading dock with a pair of barrels on its bed and another waiting atop the loading dock itself. A sign above the front entrance shows a barrel and a smiling dwarf.

This small brewery established Varnhold's own beer brand, Cheerful Delver Stout—an earthy, dark beer that swiftly became a favorite among the locals. The wagon and loading dock hold sealed barrels of the stout—still good—and another dozen barrels of the completed product can be found within. The spriggans have not yet searched this structure due to the presence of the hungry frogs at the ford.

Treasure: The stout is of decent quality, though lacking refinement, and the 15 barrels could be sold for 7 gp each. A DC 32 Perception check reveals a loose floorboard beneath one of the brewing vats; underneath it is a lockbox (DC 30 Disable Device to pick the lock) that holds 115 gp and the recipe for Cheerful Delver Stout (worth 50 gp to the right buyer).

L5. SELLEN FORD (CR 7)

The ground slopes steeply downward to the river bank, where the river runs wide and shallow, though it is muddy with the runoff of recent rains to the south. The opposite bank rises at a gentler slope into the town proper.

The Kiravoy River is shallow here, only 4 feet deep at the center. To the east, the river bed drops into a deep pool—anyone using the ford who strays too far in this direction could well find herself unexpectedly dropping into the 20-foot-deep pool.

A DC 20 Perception check made while searching the pool's depths reveals a 5-foot-wide tunnel that leads south—this flooded tunnel connects to the well in area L27.

Creature: A lone chuul that was displaced from this pool when Maegar Varn and his mercenaries drove it out has returned to its old home from upriver. The spriggans are aware of the chuul, which has caught and eaten several of them already. For now, the chuul is content to ignore the remaining spriggans if they leave it alone—hunger may eventually force it to become more aggressive.

CHUUL CR 7**XP 3,200**hp 85 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 46)**L6. PIT TRAPS (CR 6)**

At each of these locations, the mischievous spriggans have dug a pit, lined it with sharpened stakes, and crudely camouflaged it with a cover of sticks and dirt. Anyone walking through a square with one of these traps has a 50% chance of falling into it.

CAMOUFLAGED SPIKED PIT TRAP CR 6**XP 2,400****Type** mechanical; **Perception** DC 25; **Disable Device** DC 25**EFFECTS****Trigger** location; **Reset** manual

Effect 20-ft.-deep pit (2d6 falling damage); pit spikes (Atk +15 melee, 1d4 spikes per target for 1d6+5 damage each); DC 20 Reflex save avoids; multiple targets (all targets in a 10-ft.-square area)

L7. COMMONS

A greensward occupies the center of town. A few trees grow around an unoccupied pillory, and a well has been dug at the southern end.

Although the 20-foot-deep well once held good drinking water, it currently contains the decaying body of a naked spriggan, the victim of a prank gone too far. The spriggans avoid the well now.

L8. LIVERY AND BLACKSMITH (CR 7)

This long, low building partially surrounds a yard encompassed by a split-rail fence. A sign above a wide, barn-like entrance shows harness for a horse and a blacksmith's anvil. Despite the abandonment of the village, it appears that many mounts and a great deal of livestock were left behind, trapped in the livery and yard. A half-dozen horse carcasses, decomposing and ravaged by the crows that continue to pick at them, lie sprawled in the yard.

When Vordakai led the villagers away, the animals kept here were left trapped within and ultimately died of

thirst. The bodies have been serving as food for the crows for some time now.

Creatures: Because of the large number of animal carcasses lying here and the easy access to the yard and the stable itself by means of the hay loft doors, a huge number of scavenging crows have been attracted to this place to feed upon the remains.

MURDER OF CROWS CR 3**XP 800***Tome of Horrors III* 212 (raven swarm)

N Tiny animal (swarm)

Init +6; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; **Perception** +11**DEFENSE****AC** 14, touch 14, flat-footed 12 (+2 Dex, +2 size)**hp** 27 (6d8)**Fort** +5, **Ref** +9, **Will** +4**Defensive Abilities** half damage from slashing and piercing weapons; **Immune** swarm traits**OFFENSE****Speed** 5 ft., fly 40 ft. (average)**Melee** swarm (2d6 plus distraction and eye rake)**Space** 10 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.**TACTICS**

During Combat These crows are particularly aggressive, and anyone that enters the building or the nearby yard will find himself beset upon by four swarms of angry birds. Once roused, the murder of crows pursues the PCs until they seek shelter in another building. The spriggans have learned to avoid this building.

Morale The crows fight to the death.

STATISTICS**Str** 1, **Dex** 15, **Con** 10, **Int** 2, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 6**Base Atk** +4; **CMB** +4; **CMD** 9**Feats** Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Skill Focus (Perception)**Skills** Fly +12, Perception +11, Stealth +0**SPECIAL ABILITIES**

Eye-Rake (Ex) Any living creature damaged by a murder of crows must succeed on a DC 13 Reflex save or be blinded as the swarm scratches and tears at the victim's eyes. The blindness lasts for 1d4 days or until healed with *remove blindness*. The save DC is Constitution-based.

L9. TAILOR

This modest cottage is neatly kept and has curtains hanging aske in its windows.

This house served as the home and workshop for the village tailor, as evidenced by the remaining bolts of cloth and tools of the trade within. It has been thoroughly looted by the spriggans.

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Quest: Varnhold's Treasure

The PCs recover and return the belongings of Varnhold's citizens.

Source: The PCs are not assigned this quest, technically, although if they rescue the surviving Varnhold citizens, the citizens ask for the return of their belongings.

Task: Ensure that the citizens of Varnhold recover as much of their belongings as possible.

Completion: The PCs must not loot any of the treasure remaining in Varnhold (with the exception of the scrolls in the church of Erastil), or if they do, they must return the items. In addition, the Varnhold treasure held by Agai, the spriggan leader, must be returned as well.

Reward: If the PCs keep all this treasure and that fact becomes known, increase their nation's Unrest by 1d4+2. If the PCs make sure that the wealth of the villagers remains safe and is returned to them once the villagers are rescued, the resulting goodwill increases the PCs' reputation and thus increases Loyalty by +1.

man who awoke Vordakai and brought the cyclops lich's wrath down on the village. Like the other homes south of the Kirajoy, the spriggans have looted this one. A broken hand axe still lies on the table where Willas was fixing it handle when Vordakai came.

Treasure: Lying among the debris strewn about by the spriggan's search of the house is a small wooden box about the size of a wizard's spellbook. Lying near it is a book that has been torn in half at the spine. The book is about three-quarters filled with handwriting in Skald—this is Willas's journal. It records his career as a ranger in the company of Maegar Varn and includes a description of several skirmishes that occurred between the colonists and a tribe of barbaric centaurs that inhabit the hills east of Varnhold. The journal names the tribe as the Nomen centaurs. The last journal entry is dated approximately 2 weeks before the beginning of the adventure and relates a mundane scouting report of Varnhold Pass. A DC 12 Perception check locates a page partially torn from the journal. The top of the page is dated 2 months ago and simply says, "Found bracelet by the river." The rest of the page has been torn away. The next page bears a single large rune inscribed in charcoal, which a DC 20 Linguistics check (+5 competence bonus to a speaker of Skald) identifies as an archaic Ulfen symbol to ward off bad luck.

While the diary is certainly of interest to the PCs, the nearby box is the true treasure—a *folding boat* that the spriggans overlooked.

L10. POTTER

Unlike the other houses in town, the front door of this one has been broken down. A small yard adjoining the house and surrounded by a low picket fence holds the smashed remains of many clay vessels and statuettes.

This building served as the home of the village potter, who died several weeks ago of a fever. Hers is the most recent grave in the cemetery. Lord Varn had locked up her home and shop until the estate could be settled. The spriggans had to break through the door to loot this building, and the entire floor is covered by a welter of smashed pottery fragments as a result.

Treasure: Though the vandalizing spriggans took great delight in destroying the potter's wares, a DC 23 Perception check locates a hidden door. Nestled in a cushioning bed of straw is an elegant set of flagons and platters, hand crafted and chased in platinum, that was intended as a wedding gift for King Noleski's eldest daughter next spring as indicated by a small placard. The set is worth 300 gp because of its fine craftsmanship.

L11. GUNDARSON'S HOUSE

A sod house has been dug into the base of the hill. Its heavy oaken door hangs askew.

This was the home of Maegar Varn's henchman and march warden, the Ulfen ranger Willas Gundarson—the

L12. THE WATERHORSE

A two-story inn stands just off the village commons. A sign above the door depicts a rider clinging to the back of a madly galloping horse with a green mane and a fish's tail extending from its hindquarters. The inn's walls are painted a cheerful shade of yellow to complement the red shutters.

The Waterhorse was the focus of social interaction in Varnhold on days other than Sundays (when the focus shifted to the church of Erastil). The hostler, Miriam Kolescu, was of old Issian stock from a fishing village on the shore of the Lake of Mists and Veils—she brought many of her family's traditions and beliefs with her to Varnhold, though she was also a staunch loyalist to the Surtova crown. Her inn is simple but well kept. Its first floor consists of a common room (whose tables are still set with rotting plates of food), a kitchen, a bathing chamber, and stores, along with a wing for the Kolescu family. The second floor consists of six guest rooms, all of which save one were unoccupied at the time the population vanished.

The inn's most recent patron was also its most famous. The renowned Iobarian scholar and composer Ervil

Pendrod had been staying at the inn for about a week before the vanishing. Maestro Pendrod hailed from Oppara's Kitharodian Academy. His studies into the indigenous ethnicities of ancient Iobaria led him to Varnhold when Maegar Varn, a former student of his, sent him word of Willas Gundarson's find. Maestro Pendrod set up shop in the inn's common room, where he conducted his research into the mysterious "bracelet" until he disappeared with the rest of the village.

The first thing PCs notice upon approaching the front door of the inn is a single word hastily scratched into the wood of the front door in Common—"NOMEN." Maestro Pendrod used his last ounce of willpower to scratch this warning with his dagger as the beckon of Vordakai summoned him along with the rest of the village and he finally put the pieces together as to the source of the jade "bracelet."

Perhaps the most unusual feature of the Waterhorse is its sole, doomed occupant—a giant-sized spriggen that stands, silent and perfectly still, facing a paper-strewn table in the corner of the common room, one hand clutching a book. The back of the spriggen's skull is a shattered mess of blood and bone, though his face betrays no notice of this mortal wound. A shimmering nimbus of amber surrounds the spriggen's unmoving form.

Professor Pendrod had established himself in a comfortable corner of the inn's common room, where he conducted his research on the "bracelet" and the surrounding region, entertaining questions from the colonists and giving impromptu lectures on his findings. He was in the midst of such work when Vordakai came. When the spriggans arrived days ago, one of them picked up one of the professor's books (*Secrets of the Rashalka Mounds*, by Ernst Gavinport), which bore a *sepia snake sigil*. When his fellows saw the magical snake engulf and immobilize him, they fled the inn. Later when one checked to see if he was still alive (using a blow to the back of the skull) and provoked no noticeable reaction, they decided the inn was a cursed place and have left it unspoiled as a result. The *sepia snake sigil* will expire on the morrow (if not dispelled by the PCs—CL 9th), but the spriggen will collapse, dead, once the spell ends.

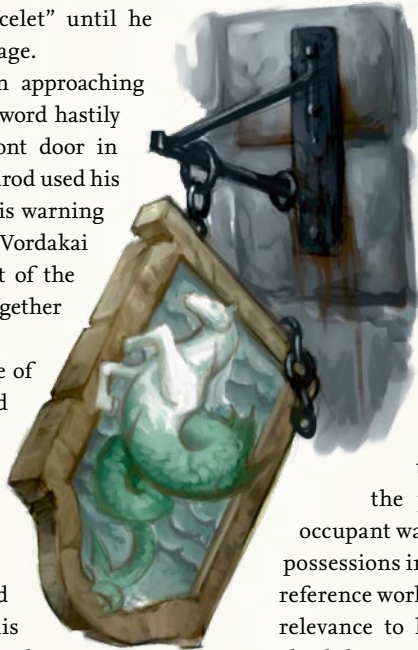
Treasure: Maestro Pendrod's research materials remain on the table in the corner; they include several books with titles like *Iobarian Prehistory*, *The Centaur Skyles of Central Casmaron*, *The Untold Heritage of the Taldan Armies of Exploration*, and the aforementioned *Secrets of the Rashalka Mounds*. Among these works is an incomplete ethnography

of the indigenous tribes of the Iobarian steppes—Pendrod was working on a section on the Rashalka centaurs and speculated that a local tribe called the Nomens is an offshoot of the greater Rashalka population that broke away and relocated to the area of Varnhold at some time in the distant past. Mixed in with the books are a number of charcoal sketches of a heavy jade bracelet bearing peculiar markings that Maestro Pendrod has attributed to the pre-migration Nomen centaurs.

At the bottom of the stack sits a letter dated 2 months ago from Maegar Varn and addressed to Maestro Pendrod. This letter describes Willas's discovery of the jade "bracelet" on the banks of a "river of local provenance" and requests Pendrod's presence for further study of the artifact. The "bracelet" itself, however, is nowhere to be found.

A search of the inn's guest rooms reveals that only one of them was inhabited at the time of the vanishing. An investigation of the personal effects that remain indicate its occupant was Ervil Pendrod. Among the more mundane possessions in his travel trunk is a small library of further reference works. These tomes seem to be of less immediate relevance to his current work, but a DC 25 Perception check locates a centuries-old geography book created by one Carmyn e'Brothasa, chronicler of Taldor's Third Army of Exploration into the north. One passage is marked by Maestro Pendrod and reproduced nearby. Pendrod's own handwriting in the margin of the text contains a simple but strange note: "Vordakai—perhaps a Nomen centaur god?" The book, frustratingly, does not provide a location to the semi-mythical island mentioned in the text, nor does it provide any further clues to Pendrod's cryptic margin note. The name "Vordakai" is a difficult one to recognize, but a DC 40 Knowledge (history) check is enough to recall it as the name of an ancient Iobarian cyclops necromancer who once ruled a pre-Earthfall empire in this region. The PCs are more likely to need to seek out the Nomen centaurs to learn more about this name (see Part Three).

The inn's till holds 37 gp, 52 sp, and 114 cp. Maestro Pendrod's collection of books could be sold to a bookdealer for as much as 900 gp, though they might question how the PCs came by books that bear the professor's own sigil as well as that of the Kitharodian Academy on the inside cover. The academy itself would pay a 500 gp reward for the return of all of Maestro Pendrod's books and papers. His masterwork viola, recognizable as the work of the master craftsman Azores of Wispil, can be found beneath his bed with a DC 17 Perception check. It is worth 1,600 gp, though its return would bring a 2,000 gp reward from the academy.



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Handout 1

And so it was, high upon the Torres and well above the Vale's Stairs, where rises from the high water a stony isle of dire report. Known as Vordakai's Island to those that do live thereabout, some legend of its name doth come down through the locals. For they speak of a guardian that doth destroy all who would set foot upon its accursed shores. They did name no fewer than a twelvecount of their hero-knights who had left their bones upon its rocky shores over the years after having tested their mettle against its dread warden, 'til none would any longer go there for fear of its hidden terrors. And the name of this terror was given unto this island.

L13. CHURCH OF ERASTIL (CR 4)

A small church stands here, its whitewashed walls and stained-glass windows gleaming in the sun. The bow symbol of Erastil shines like a beacon above the doors. Behind it on one side sits a neatly kept parsonage, and on the other a low hill holds the beginnings of a small cemetery.

This small church of Erastil was established by Maegar Varn's companion, the cleric Caspar Morgarion. It served as the official church of Varnhold. The interior is simply furnished with wooden pews and a humble altar. It has been thoroughly looted by the spriggans. The cemetery was established when the colony experienced its first casualties, who succumbed to the elements and Nomen raiders. It holds a total of 14 wooden grave markers, the latest one standing over a fairly fresh grave. That marker reads, "Andrisha the Potter," and is dated several weeks ago.

Treasure: The spriggans weren't completely efficient in their looting of the church—a DC 25 Perception check made while searching the church reveals a hidden drawer in the altar that contains several scrolls the priest had stashed in case of emergencies: three *scrolls of cure serious wounds*, three *scrolls of remove paralysis*, a *scroll of restoration*, a *scroll of break enchantment*, a *scroll of breath of life*, and a *scroll of raise dead*. Since the current situation in Varnhold certainly qualifies as an emergency, if the PCs claim and use these scrolls, they won't suffer any backlash from the villagers as a result.

L14. WEAVER

This cottage has cheerful curtains in its windows. A number of wooden children's toys lie abandoned in the front yard.

This was the home of the colony's weaver, his wife, and their four children, who ranged in ages from 15 to 2. The cramped house is occupied by his loom as well as large reels of thread.

Anyone making a DC 14 Perception check notices a half-starved calico cat named Dragon hiding beneath the loom and watching the party warily. If coaxed out with food or a DC 15 wild empathy check, the PCs can attempt to communicate with it by magical means like *speak with animals*. If questioned, it can relate, "My feeders left me in the red-sun time when they heard the new bird song. I was busy eating a bit of fish and did not follow them out. My feeders did not come back and I am now quite hungry for some more fish!" A DC 20 Knowledge (nature) check identifies the red-sun time as the evening and the new bird song as some sort of music, perhaps, but can make no further headway with the animal's description.

L15. GRANGE (CR 7)

This giant barn has both a cargo door on the front and a smaller door on the side where a lean-to abuts the structure. The strong odor of barley and other grains wafts through the seams in the clapboard walls.

Creatures: The grange was never vermin-proof in the best of times, and since the vanishing, local field rats have moved in to feed off the stored grain in earnest. There are thousands of rats in the building, gorging themselves on the grain. Fiercely territorial and aggressive, the rats swarm to attack anything they perceive as trespassing, pursuing foes outside the grange for 1d4 rounds before they return to continue their feeding.

The Varnhold Vanishing



RAT SWARMS (6)

CR 2

XP 600 each

hp 16 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 232)

L16. GEMCUTTER

The sturdy wooden walls of this house have been staved in at several locations, and the heavy door has been battered down.

This house served as the home and shop of the local gemcutter, his wife, and his hired guard. When the spriggans searched this house, they quickly discovered that it contained considerable wealth and literally demolished the interior to find any secret panels or hidden caches.

L17. STOCKADE AND BLOCKHOUSE

Perched atop a low hill, this triangular fortification looms over the town. A palisade of sharpened stakes leaves enough gaps for archers within to fire out upon the surrounding hillsides. The southern corners of the fort both have twin watch platforms, and the northern corner is anchored by a solid-looking blockhouse of sturdy timbers. A thin column of smoke drifts upward from a fire in the stockade's compound.

The 8-foot-tall stockade wall requires a DC 17 Climb check to surmount. At the top, a DC 17 Balance check allows the climber to avoid impaling herself on fire-hardened tips for 1d6 points of damage (remember, taking damage while climbing can result in a fall!).

The stockade and blockhouse have been claimed by the Culcheck tribe, a mob of a dozen brutish fey monsters known as spriggans—strange, feral gnome-like creatures who can assume the size of giants in a battle. When spriggans are their normal size, they're lanky humanoids with pointed ears and noses, tiny beady eyes, and, with a few exceptions, bald heads. When they grow to giant size, they become incredibly muscled and broad. Their skin is generally a foul green or gray, and they tend to wear scraps and rags over their armor.

The Culcheks followed their chieftain here from their previous cavern lair about a week ago, after noticing the human village had been abandoned. If an alarm is sounded, the spriggans' first priority is to seal the blockhouse (areas L25–L37). The spriggan in area L25 closes and bars the door and retreats to area L26, where she is joined by the spriggans from L28; together they defend the door. One spriggan in area L35 climbs to area L37 and assumes Large form in order to throw rocks at intruders, while the other spriggan in L35 becomes large

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and holds the room. The chieftain joins the spriggans in area **L36** to man the murder holes and firing loops. Those spriggans trapped outside the blockhouse assume Large forms to try and drive back the invaders.

SPRIGGAN CR 3

XP 800

Tome of Horrors Revised 326

CE Small humanoid (gnome)

Init +4; **Senses** low-light vision; Perception +7

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 15, flat-footed 13 (+2 armor, +4 Dex, +1 size)

hp 22 (4d8+4)

Fort +5, **Ref** +5, **Will** +1

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee mwk halberd +5 (1d8-1/19-20)

Ranged dagger +8 (1d3-1/19-20)

Special Attacks sneak attack +2d6

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 4th; concentration +4)

At will—*flare* (DC 10), *scare* (DC 12), *shatter* (DC 12)

STATISTICS

Str 9, **Dex** 19, **Con** 12, **Int** 10, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 9

Base Atk +3; **CMB** +1; **CMD** 15

Feats Combat Reflexes, Weapon

Focus (halberd)

Skills Climb +0, Disable Device +11, Perception

+7, Sleight of Hand +11, Stealth +15

Languages Aklo, Gnome

SQ size alteration, spriggan magic, spriggan skills

Gear leather armor, daggers (4), masterwork halberd, assorted stolen coins, gems, and jewelry worth 50 gp in all

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Size Alteration (Su) At will, as a standard action, a spriggan can change its size between Small and Large. Weapons, armor, and other objects on the spriggan's person grow proportionally when it changes size (objects revert to normal size 1 round after a spriggan releases them). When a spriggan becomes Large, it gains +12 Strength, -2 Dexterity, +6 Constitution, and a -2 size penalty to its AC. While Large, a spriggan cannot use its sneak attack or the spell-like abilities granted by its race (although if it possesses either from class levels or templates, it retains their use in both sizes).

Spriggan Magic (Ex) A spriggan gains a +1 racial bonus on concentration checks and save DCs for all spell-like abilities.

Spriggan Skills (Ex) Climb, Disable Device, Perception, Sleight of Hand, and Stealth are class skills for spriggans. They gain a +2 racial bonus on all of these skills.

A large spriggan's stats change as follows:

LARGE SPRIGGAN

Init +3

DEFENSE

AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 11 (+2 armor, +3 Dex, -1 size)

hp 34 (4d8+16)

Fort +8, **Ref** +4, **Will** +1

OFFENSE

Melee mwk halberd +9 (2d8+5/x3)

Ranged dagger +5 (1d6+5/19-20)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

STATISTICS

Str 21, **Dex** 17, **Con** 18, **Int** 10, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 9

Base Atk +3; **CMB** +9; **CMD** 22

Skills Climb +0, Disable Device +10, Perception +7, Sleight of Hand +10, Stealth +6

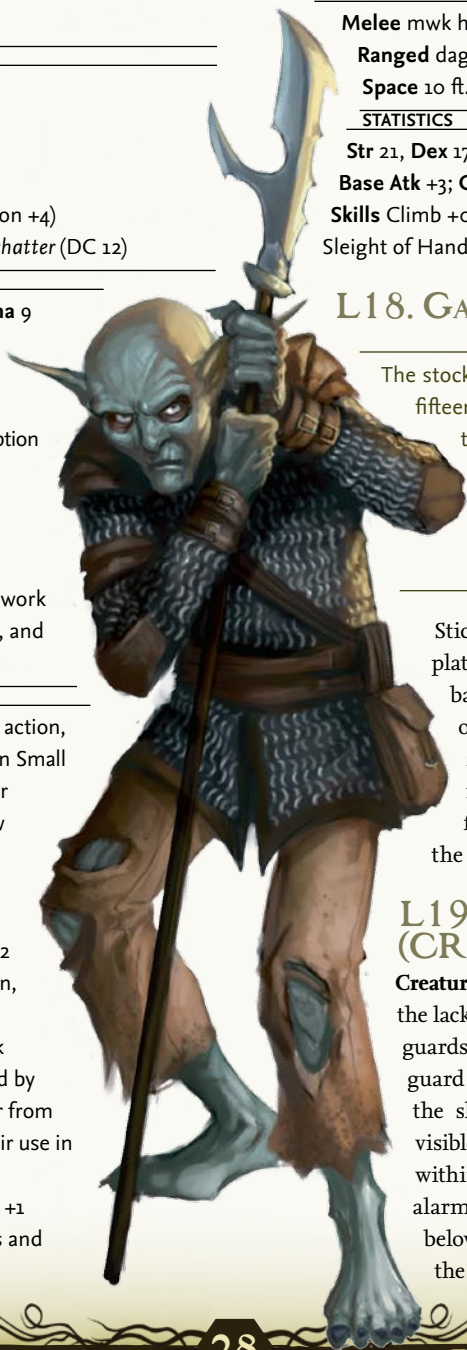
L18. GATEHOUSE

The stockade's gatehouse towers are composed of fifteen-foot-tall sharpened stakes, fitted tightly together to form a solid wooden wall. A ladder-accessible platform has been built into each wall, ten feet above the ground. A number of helmets are barely visible over the edge of the wall.

Sticks have been propped up on these platforms, and helmets from area **L30** balance on them to give the appearance of six guardsmen standing watch. A DC 20 Perception check is able to detect the ruse (+2 cumulative circumstance bonus for every full minute spent observing the unmoving sentries).

L19. WEST GATETOWERS (CR 3)

Creature: This area is similar to area **L18**, save for the lack of a gate. In addition, instead of the fake guards set up at **L18**, an actual spriggan keeps guard here. He, too, peeps between the tips of the sharpened stakes with only his helmet visible over the top. If he sees anyone approach within 30 feet, he throws a dagger and raises the alarm before clambering down to the courtyard below and assuming Large size to help defend the stockade.



SPRIGGAN**CR 3****XP 800****hp 22** (see page 28)**L20. CORRAL AND TOOL SHED (CR 5)**

This area is surrounded by split-rail fence that, anchored at one end by a rough shed built from logs, serves as a corral. The corral is empty save for a number of gnawed and picked bones.

The spriggans have eaten the livestock that was once kept here. The tool shed holds the mundane equipment needed for the maintenance of the livestock and the stockade. Two male spriggans who are supposed to be on guard duty at area **L18** have instead snuck into this tool shed to drink dry several barrels of ale they found stored here. As a result, they are effectively sickened. If the alarm is raised, they wake and join the battle in 1d3 rounds.

SPRIGGANS (2)**CR 3****XP 800 each****hp 22 each** (see page 28)**L21. OUTHOUSES**

These two rickety outhouses are mundane in every way, although the spriggans have been somewhat poor caretakers and cleaners.

L22. STOREHOUSE

This long, low building is composed of logs closely chinked with a mixture of mud and mortar.

This storehouse was Maegar Varn's home while the blockhouse was being constructed, but it has since been converted to hold stores for the stockade. It contains a sizable store of dried fruits and vegetables, bags of grains, and assorted roots and tubers (all food not to the spriggans' tastes), along with a large number of tools and other supplies.

Treasure: The supplies stored here are worth 1 BP in all if they are incorporated into the PCs' kingdom.

L23. SMITHY

This small building has an open front, where a forge and anvil sit unused.

Varnhold's smith and weapon master Howitt Gurney once plied his trade here. The anvil could make an excellent thrown weapon for a Large spriggan (damage 2d8, range increment 10 feet).

L24. YARD (CR 6)

This yard is composed of churned mud and scraggly weeds. A crudely built well stands near the center, while not far away is a large bonfire with a spit holding a side of beef over it.

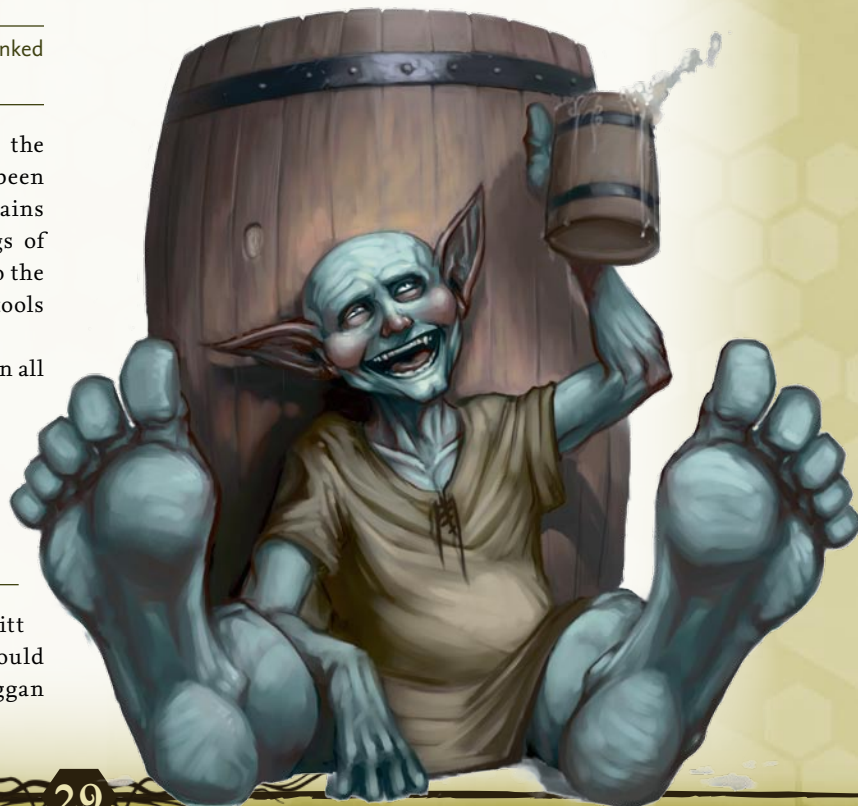
Creature: A lone spriggan in Large form mans this yard, turning the spit as it chars the rancid flesh of a milk cow that died several days ago. The spriggans' pets, a group of four wolves, jump and caper nearby, eager for dinner or the chance to attack intruders.

SPRIGGAN**CR 3****XP 800****hp 22** (see page 28)**WOLVES (4)****CR 1****XP 400 each****hp 13 each** (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 278)

Trap: Just outside the entrance to the blockhouse is a covered pit identical to those at area **L6**. The spriggans are careful to walk around the trapped area when they come and go from the blockhouse.

CAMOUFLAGED SPIKED PIT TRAP**CR 6****XP 2,400**

See page 23.



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L25. ENTRY (CR 3)

The entrance into the blockhouse is kept secured by a bar—it's a DC 23 Strength check to break the door down.

Creature: This entry is guarded by a single spriggan. She retreats to area L26 if the alarm is raised, barring that door as well.

SPRIGGAN

CR 3

XP 800

hp 22 (see page 28)

L26. STRONGROOM

This chamber has a strong wooden door that can be barred from the inside (DC 23 Strength to open) and firing loops that look out into area L25. The firing loops provide improved cover.

L27. WELL ROOM

This chamber contains a small well and several full water barrels to provide a secondary water supply in case the stockade falls to attackers. Twenty buckets are stacked against the south wall.

The buckets are used in case of fire to form bucket lines from the well to the fire—if the PCs use fire to try to smoke out the spriggans, the spriggans use these buckets to put out the fire. The well itself is 40 feet deep, the bottom 20 feet of which are filled with water. It's a DC 20 Climb check to scale the well's shaft. Underwater, a 5-foot-wide, water-filled tunnel connects to the deep pool at area L5.

Treasure: A DC 25 Perception check reveals a hidden niche in the wall a few feet above the waterline—inside are four *potions of water breathing*, placed here by Maegar Varn so that the underwater tunnel could serve as an escape route.

L28. BUNKHOUSE (CR 5)

This bunkhouse holds bunks for a dozen individuals and has hooks on the wall for their clothing and equipment.

Creatures: Currently, two spriggans are asleep in here. If an alarm is sounded, they require 6 rounds to gather their weapons and hastily pull on their armor (–1 to AC) before relocating to area L26.

SPRIGGANS (2)

CR 3

XP 800 each

hp 22 each (see page 28)

L29. SERGEANT-AT-ARMS'S QUARTERS

This chamber contains a bed, a chest of drawers, and a sparring dummy, and seems to have been searched thoroughly.

This room once served as the abode of Howitt Gurney, adventuring companion to Maegor Varn and weapons master, armorer, and sergeant-at-arms of Varnhold.

L30. ARMORY

A large number of weapons and suits of armor are stored here—the gear seems to have been rifled through but not thoroughly searched.

Treasure: This chamber has been left largely unmolested as the weapons are not sized correctly for spriggans. Hanging from racks and packed in chests are 12 suits of padded armor, a masterwork breastplate, seven light wooden shields, 20 spears, three short swords, two handaxes, a shortbow, two longbows, four light crossbows, 2 heavy crossbows, a +1 *morningstar*, 200 arrows, and 220 crossbow bolts.

L31. DOVECOTE

Wire cages hang from the rafters of this chamber, and the floor beneath is spattered with droppings. Sacks of seed are stacked near the door. The cage doors stand open and are empty but for a sprinkling of feathers.

Messenger pigeons were once kept here by Cephal Lorentus. They have all been eaten by the spriggans.

L32. KITCHEN AND STORES (CR 8)

This chamber is cluttered with the accoutrements of a kitchen, complete with a small fireplace and grill, as well as a larder for foodstuffs. Crates and boxes are stacked in the western portion, while the main area has been converted into a bedroom.

Creature: This is the den of the Culcheck chieftain, Agai. He spends most of his time here sorting through the treasures recovered from the village and worrying about the villagers' return—if the alarm is raised, he joins the spriggans in area L36 to fire his crossbow out of the arrowslits at any foes outside.

AGAI

CR 8

XP 4,800

Male spriggan fighter 5 (*Tome of Horrors Revised* 326)

CE Small humanoid (gnome)

Init +3; **Senses** low-light vision; Perception +12

DEFENSE

AC 21, touch 14, flat-footed 18 (+7 armor, +3 Dex, +1 size)

hp 77 (9 HD; 4d8+5d10+32)

Fort +11, **Ref** +5, **Will** +3; +1 vs. fear

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee mwk greatclub +14/+9 (1d8+5)

Ranged +1 seeking heavy crossbow +14/+9 (1d8+5/19–20)

Special Attacks sneak attack +2d6

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 4th; concentration +4)

At will—*flare* (DC 10), *scare* (DC 12), *shatter* (DC 12)

TACTICS

During Combat Agai fights from L36 until the blockhouse is breached. Once the enemy gets into the blockhouse, he leads his kin from L35 and L36 up to the roof at L37. There, he uses the barrel of oil to light the roof of the building on fire while they scramble down the building into the courtyard below. Once there, he assumes Large form and prepares to attack anyone who flees the burning wooden blockhouse.

Morale If all of his kin are slain and he is reduced to fewer than 15 hit points, Agai flees into the mountains, though he may stalk the PCs to ambush them later.

STATISTICS

Str 14, **Dex** 17, **Con** 16, **Int** 10, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 11

Base Atk +8; **CMB** +9; **CMD** 22

Feats Combat Reflexes, Power

Attack, Rapid Reload, Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (greatclub), Weapon Focus (heavy crossbow), Weapon Specialization (greatclub), Weapon Specialization (heavy crossbow)

Skills Climb +4, Intimidate +9,

Perception +12, Stealth +16

Languages Aklo, Gnome

SQ armor training +1, bravery +1,

size alteration, spriggan magic, spriggan skills, weapon training (hammers +1),

Combat Gear *potion of cure*

moderate wounds; **Gear** +1

breastplate, +1 seeking heavy crossbow

with 20 bolts, masterwork greatclub, *bag of holding* (type IV)

In his Large form, Agai's stats change as follows.

ENLARGED AGAI

Init +2; Senses low-light vision;

Perception +12

DEFENSE

AC 18, touch 11, flat-footed 16

(+7 armor, +2 Dex, –1 size)

hp 104 (9 HD; 4d8+5d10+59)

Fort +14, **Ref** +4, **Will** +3; +1 vs. fear

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee mwk greatclub +18/+13 (2d8+11)

Ranged +1 seeking heavy crossbow +11/+6 (2d8+11/19–20)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

STATISTICS

Str 26, **Dex** 15, **Con** 22, **Int** 10, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 11

Base Atk +8; **CMB** +17; **CMD** 29

Feats Combat Reflexes, Power Attack, Rapid Reload, Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (greatclub), Weapon Focus (heavy crossbow), Weapon Specialization (greatclub), Weapon Specialization (heavy crossbow)

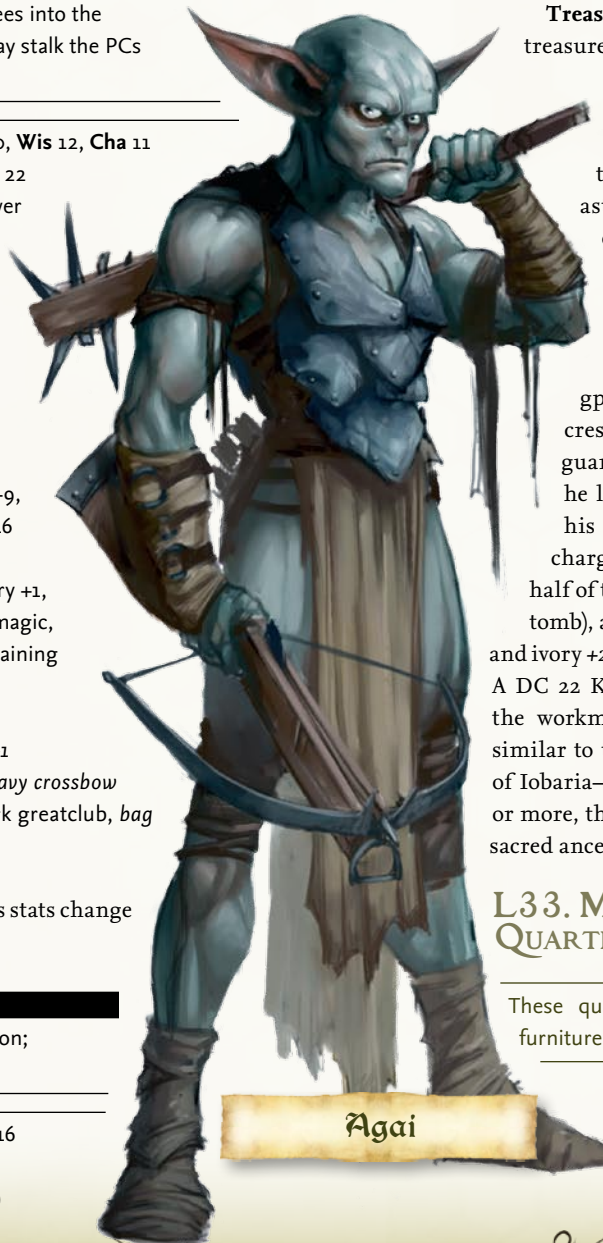
Skills Climb +10, Intimidate +9, Perception +12, Stealth +7

Treasure: Agai carries the collected treasures looted from the village as well as his treasury from the spriggnans' previous lair in his *bag of holding*. The bag contains the following treasure (items marked with an asterisk are from the spriggnans' original lair and were not looted from Varnhold): 6,000 gp in assorted coins and jewelry, a small payroll coffer holding 500 gp, an assortment of gems* worth 3,500 gp, a +2 *defending longsword* with the crest of House Varn on its pommel guard (this belonged to Maegar Varn—he left it behind when he was lured to his doom), a *wand of spectral hand** (17 charges), a *ring of friend shield** (the other half of the pair is in area W27 in Vordakai's tomb), and *Skybolt*—an exquisite darkwood and ivory +2 *thundering composite longbow* (+4 Str). A DC 22 Knowledge (nature) check identifies the workmanship of this longbow as being similar to that of several of the centaur tribes of Iobaria—if the check exceeds the DC by 10 or more, the character knows the longbow is a sacred ancestral relic of the Nomen tribe.

L33. MASTER OF DISPATCH'S QUARTERS

These quarters are now a chaos of broken furniture and scattered parchments.

This room served as the chamber for Cephal Lorentus, Varn's wizard, birdkeeper, and master of dispatch. His small library



Agai

Kingmaker Part 3 of 6

Quest: Skybolt

Return *Skybolt*, the magic bow, to the Nomen centaurs.

Source: Treasure found in Agai's *bag of holding*, or alternatively, the leader of the Nomen centaurs.

Task: Recover the missing bow, which was stolen many months ago by the spriggans.

Completion: Return *Skybolt* to the Nomen centaurs.

Reward: Completing this quest not only proves to the Nomen centaurs that their spriggan enemies have been defeated, but also earns their trust—they now agree to speak to the PCs about the Varnhold vanishing and will aid them.

has been utterly destroyed by the spriggans, and a search through the scattered parchments reveals only mundane correspondence between the colony and Restov. There are a number of mentions of conflicts with the Nomen centaur tribe, but nothing to hint at what may have befallen the village.

Treasure: A DC 23 Search check locates an intact page or pages torn from one of Cephal's spellbooks. This check can be attempted a total of 6 times, with each success discovering one of the following spells: *bear's endurance*, *comprehend languages*, *flaming sphere*, *keen edge*, *mount*, and *tiny hut*.

L34. GOVERNOR'S QUARTERS

The only hint that this room once housed the leader of Varnhold is the large map of the Nomen heights tacked to one wall. The map has been torn to shreds, and the other bedroom furnishings are either similarly ruined or else missing.

Treasure: Agai claimed many of the furnishings from Maegar Varn's bedroom for his new home and destroyed the rest. The map on the wall is fragmentary, but a DC 25 Perception check is enough to reconstruct it. Doing so allows the PCs to fill in all of the terrain details and non-hidden encounter areas within two hexes of Varnhold, as well as the hex containing the Nomen tribe (area P). Consider these hexes explored by the PCs (although any unvisited encounter areas must be resolved by an actual trip to those areas), awarding them the normal 100 XP reward for each new hex added to their map.

L35. GUARDROOM (CR 5)

Creatures: Two off-duty spriggans pass their time in this room. The ceiling of this chamber forms a 10-foot-wide shaft that extends upward 20 feet to the floor of area L36, and a ladder bolted to the north wall leads to a trap door leading out to the watch post.

SPRIGGANS (2)

CR 3

XP 800 each

hp 22 each (see page 28)

L36. OVERLOOK (CR 5)

This narrow corridor is set with firing loops and murder holes to provide a view of the surrounding grounds and the area immediately below.

The firing loops provide improved cover. Stacked in the corners are piles of broken rock for throwing down through the murder holes on attackers.

Creatures: Two spriggans patrol this corridor, looking out the loopholes every few minutes. They raise the alarm and fire their crossbows if intruders are sighted.

SPRIGGANS (2)

CR 3

XP 800 each

hp 22 each (see page 28)

L37. WATCH POST

This rooftop platform provides a commanding view of the village and surrounding area. Close-set logs provide cover to anyone standing a watch. A single barrel sits in one corner of the platform, while opposite sits a large oil-burning brazier.

The spriggans do not currently use the watch post, as they find it too hot and uncomfortable in the sun's unshaded rays. A broken pole lying on the platform floor bears the soiled banners of both Brevoy and the house of Varn. When Varnhold was active, the brazier served as a beacon and was lit every evening to bring good luck on the next day. This is little more than a local superstition—although it's worth noting that the night Vordakai came to town, a guard forgot to light the beacon.

PART THREE: AMONG THE NOMEN

The Nomen tribe is an offshoot of the mighty Rashalkas ("thundering hooves") that once roamed the northern Casmar steppes by the tens of thousands. In the distant past, the branch destined to become the Nomens migrated northwest into the fringes of Avistan, eventually coming into conflict with the indigenous tribes that would one day form the nation of Brevoy. The Nomens follow a tribal tradition that they serve as guardians against an ancient evil they know only by the name Vordakai—although no Nomens remember the truth of this ancient menace today, for over the generations, the facts behind these traditions

fell into obscurity and were largely forgotten. While the Valley of the Dead and the region of the Tors of Levenies above this mysterious site remain taboo to the Nomens, they know not the exact reasons for this tradition. To the Nomens, the tradition itself is all they need to continue in their ways.

The Nomens are a matriarchal society led by a war-priestess, a centaur dedicated to the worship of Desna in an aspect they call “Mother Moon.” Due to heavy losses among their warrior males while fighting the Taldan Phalanx and Horse generations earlier and a preponderance of female births, the great majority of the Nomens are females, who now comprise their principal warrior class. Though males are allowed among their number, they represent a much smaller portion. Males are instead encouraged to take up the bow as hunters, a much safer profession, in order to prevent their potential loss in battle—the loss of enough males would spell the doom of the entire tribe as it could no longer reproduce in viable numbers.

A DC 25 Knowledge (nature) check is enough to learn all of the current history of the Nomen tribe back to their conflict with the Taldan Army of Exploration. A DC 40 Knowledge (history) check is required to know the truth behind their tradition of guarding the Valley of the Dead and Vordakai’s tomb.

APPROACHING THE NOMENS (CR 9)

Many of the clues the PCs find in Varnhold implicate the Nomen centaurs. But despite the fact that the Nomens have had their share of clashes with Varnhold, they are not responsible for the vanishing. Instead, their traditions and knowledge of the area can set the PCs on the right path to rescuing the villagers.

The Nomens are not a friendly tribe. Generations of conflict with humanity have left them with an ill opinion of the two-leggers, and if the PCs decide to seek the Nomens out, they’ll need to tread lightly and diplomatically or they’ll have a fight on their hands. The PCs can contact the Nomens by wandering the Dunsward until they randomly encounter a war party. They might also attract the attention of a war party while they’re exploring another Dunsward encounter area. If they learned the location of the Nomen tribe (such as from the map in area L34) or simply stumble upon it while exploring, a war party rides out to intercept them as they approach (unless they use stealth).

Creatures: A Nomen warband consists of eight centaurs. Although they speak Common, they do so relatively poorly and prefer to speak in Sylvan. The centaurs are far from subtle in their approach—a thunderous galloping charge accompanied by shrill howls. Yet for all their aggressive posturing, they do not initiate attack, preferring instead to surround the PCs and gauge their responses to the threatening display. If the PCs attack, the centaurs fight

back until at least three of their number are defeated, at which point they flee back to their campsite—inadvertently leading the PCs to their den, for the trail they leave in this case is simple to track.

If the PCs instead attempt peaceful contact, they’ll need to adjust the centaur warband’s initial attitude of unfriendly to friendly. This is possible with a DC 31 Diplomacy check. A DC 16 Intimidate check makes the centaurs friendly for only 1d6 × 10 minutes; unless the PCs are already close to the tribe, it won’t last long enough for the centaurs to lead the PCs to area P (although it certainly lasts long enough for the PCs to bully the location of the camp out of them). Speaking in Sylvan grants a +5 bonus on both checks, and presenting the longbow *Skybolt* automatically makes them friendly.

CENTAURS (8)

CR 3

XP 800 each

hp 30 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 42)

IN THE PRESENCE OF MOTHER MOON

The Nomens’ campsite is currently located in the southwestern Dunsward, at location P. The camp itself sits in a low hillock surrounded by a sea of grass. A large bonfire dominates the center of the camp, around which more of the horsewomen dance in a primal rhythm long lost to the civilized soul. A scattering of open-sided hide huts numbering no more than five score are ranged around the hollow, inside which other members of this tribe congregate, eat, or sleep. Everywhere, the heavily armed and armored centaurs sharpen weapons, tend to gear, or walk patrols, all with a feral economy of movement and sound. These are the true inheritors of an age long gone when the steppes rang to the thunder of their herds and the fury of their war cries, while the first inklings of civilization clung to shorelines and riverbanks like children to their mothers’ skirts—afraid of the dark wilderness and its wild masters.

The encampment is home to the majority of the Nomen centaur tribe, a matriarchal culture dominated by its warrior-women and led by a war-priestess dedicated to their Mother Moon. In all, there are 200 centaurs in the tribe, and even though at any one time 60 to 80 are out hunting or patrolling, the remaining numbers are sizable enough that open hostility should not be a viable option.

If the PCs manage to enter the encampment without being intercepted by a war party, they’ll be confronted as soon as they make themselves known—but any Diplomacy checks made in this situation suffer a –5 penalty as the centaurs are spooked and startled by the PCs’ sudden appearance in their camp. If the PCs fail to make the centaurs friendly, they are forcefully escorted out of the Dunsward—otherwise they are brought into the center of

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the camp near the bonfire for an audience with their tribal war-priestess.

If the PCs came peacefully, they are brought to one of the tents erected near the fire where the war-priestess, **Aecora Silverfire** (N female centaur druid of Mother Moon 7), presides over the nightly ritual. She completes her observances to Mother Moon while the PCs watch before she turns to them. She is an irritable creature, long embittered by the violent territorial expansion of humans, but she is possessed of enough wisdom to know that trespassers are not always the enemy. She is initially silent as the PCs' Nomen escort tells them to explain to the war-priestess why they encroached upon the Nomens' lands. Her initial attitude is unfriendly, and unless they can make her helpful with a DC 34 Diplomacy check, she has little patience for the visitors. Yet she can still see their need for advice, and the vanishing at Varnhold does disturb her. Even though the Nomens were no allies of Varnhold, what happened to the human village could happen to her tribe next. Thus, if the PCs are unable to make her helpful, she presents them with an opportunity to prove their worth to her—she asks them



to seek out the Culchek spriggans and return with an important magical bow the monsters stole from her people several years ago. Aecora can give the PCs directions to the Culchek cavern (area O); she's unaware of the fact that the spriggans have moved into Varnhold.

If the PCs make her helpful, either via Diplomacy, magic, or more likely the gift of *Skybolt*, Aecora's voice softens and she even grows somewhat apologetic. She can explain to the PCs much of her people's history back to their clash with Taldor's Army of Exploration. If asked about the vanishing at Varnhold, she denies that the Nomens had any involvement and invites the PCs to search their camp (under supervision) for any evidence to the contrary. She may initially suspect that the Culchek spriggans were responsible, but learning that there were no bodies or signs of battle convinces her that this theory is false as well.

Eventually Aecora grows quiet and solemn—if the PCs mention the name Vordakai, she enters this state immediately. After a moment, she admits that the name is not unknown to her. According to their traditions, "Vordakai" is a "slumbering warlord from the time of the mother tribes." In other words, this Vordakai is an ancient, powerful figure from a point in the distant past. Aecora apologizes for being unable to give the PCs more information, as her tribe has lost much of its history in the years since they were dispersed by Taldor's army. Yet there is a place the PCs might go to learn more—although it is a place that she fears may be their doom if they travel there.

At this point, Aecora tells the PCs of a place to the west called Olah-Kakanket—the "Valley of the Dead." This place is taboo to the Nomens, but their traditions also dictate that they must watch the valley for signs of disturbance or strange awakenings. Recently, a Nomen huntress claimed to have seen a strange and frightful shape lumbering amid the stones of Olah-Kakanket. Aecora ominously wonders if, perhaps, the humans of Varnhold with their insatiable curiosity and drive to expand and conquer might have entered Olah-Kakanket, and if this, perhaps, might be tied to the vanishing. One thing she can confirm, though, is that the name "Vordakai" is associated with a narrow trail that leads up into the mountains from the far end of Olah-Kakanket—she believes that the valley is a graveyard, and that this trail leads to Vordakai's tomb.

Before the party departs, Aecora makes one final plea. Almost as if ashamed (for that she is, turning to others beyond her tribe to solve a problem), she admits that the Nomen who claimed to see a strange shape lumbering deep in Olah-Kakanket was

her headstrong daughter Xamanthe. When Xamanthe confronted Aecora, demanding to learn more about the site, Aecora was unable to satisfy her curiosity. Xamanthe has been missing for several days now, and Aecora fears the worst—that her daughter has broken tradition and entered Olah-Kakanket to investigate it on her own. The possibility that her daughter broke this taboo is painful for Aecora to contemplate, but the possibility of the loss of her daughter is yet more painful. She asks the PCs to remain observant if they intend to enter Olah-Kakanket, and to search for clues as to Xamanthe's whereabouts if they can.

Once the meeting with Aecora is over, the centaur politely asks the PCs to leave their encampment. The PCs' presence makes most of the Nomen uncomfortable and nervous—old prejudices and fears do not die over the course of a single meeting, after all.

PART FOUR: VORDAKAI'S TOMB

Deep in the Tors of Levenies, where the Little Sellen River cascades over a cliff side into a deep mountain tarn, lies a strange island—the grave marker of Vordakai's Tomb and a surviving complex from a cyclops empire that predated Earthfall. This island protrudes dramatically from the pool, almost like a stony finger pointing into the sky. Though the island is all but forgotten today, ancient texts (such as the ancient geography book by Carmyn e'Brothasa that the PCs may have found in area L12) refer to it as Vordakai's Island, little suspecting the name refers not to some forgotten explorer but to the cyclops lich that dwells in a tomb carved into the island's stony heart.

Since he was slain eons ago by treacherous kin, Vordakai has slumbered half in and half out of undeath in his tomb, unmoving while he awaited the call of his otherworldly masters, not knowing that a watch had been set by the bitter enemies of his race, the centaurs of Iobaria, to prevent intrusion into his tomb and the subsequent awakening that would surely follow. Even in latter years when the watch of the Nomen tribe faltered and humans from the surrounding lands managed to penetrate the outer precincts of the tomb, its remote location continued to ensure that none broke the wards that kept him in his torpor. Not until the coming of Willas Gundarson from the recently established colony of Varnhold, who stole a treasure from the tomb and set off the tomb's wards, did Vordakai finally awaken. Now, the ancient lich studies a strange new world through the eyes of a recently acquired raven familiar and via interrogations of the villagers he snatched from Varnhold. As he reacquaints himself with the world and

Quest: Rescuing Xamanthe

Rescue the centaur Xamanthe from Vordakai's Tomb.

Source: Aecora Silverfire, war-priestess of the Nomen centaurs.

Task: Find Aecora's daughter Xamanthe or proof of her fate.

Completion: Escort Xamanthe (or bring her body) back to the Nomen tribe, or spin a convincing tale of her fate.

Reward: If the mystery of Xamanthe's disappearance is explained, Aecora thanks the PCs for their aid and rewards them with a gift of potions—6 *potions of cure moderate wounds* and 6 *potions of lesser restoration*. If the PCs escort Xamanthe alive back to her mother, Aecora is overjoyed and offers the PCs *Skybolt* (if the bow has been returned) as thanks—symbolically accepting them into the Nomen tribe. This action has the additional effect of allying the Nomen with the PCs' kingdom, which increases their kingdom's Stability by 2.

learns that his people's time has long passed, Vordakai grows increasingly convinced that he has been reborn into a world that is ripe for his rule.

WHAT COMES IN DARKNESS (CR 7)

The lich Vordakai remains in his tomb for the duration of this adventure, but he is far from uninformed about the outside world. In particular, his raven familiar Horagnamon has been scouring the Nomen Heights while Vordakai uses his magical *oculus of Abaddon* to see the world through the bird's eyes. In this way, Vordakai has learned of the PCs and has been following their movements and progress (see "The Watcher," page 21). Eventually, Vordakai realizes that the PCs are invariably going to find his tomb, and before that happens the lich decides to strike first with a hideous conjured assassin called a soul eater.

Creature: Vordakai uses the *oculus of Abaddon* to conjure an inky cloud of smoke from which two pale arms ending in murderous claws extend—a native of the realm of Abaddon known as a soul eater. Once conjured, the soul eater leaves Vordakai's tomb and, using its spell-like abilities, seeks the PCs out. You can time this fight to occur at any point during the adventure before the PCs reach Vordakai's tomb but after they've first been spotted by Horagnamon. An attack on the PCs' camp at night could be one exciting possibility, as could a siege against them as they slumber in a reclaimed Varnhold building. When this encounter occurs, Vordakai must assign one PC as the soul eater's target—the lich prefers to target arcane spellcasters first, then divine spellcasters, then nonspellcasters.

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SOUL EATER

CR 7

XP 3,200

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NE Medium outsider (evil, extraplanar)

Init +10; Senses darkvision 60 ft., all-around vision; Perception +14

DEFENSE

AC 21, touch 17, flat-footed 14 (+6 Dex, +1 dodge, +4 natural)

hp 82 (11d10+22)

Fort +5, Ref +13, Will +7

DR 10/magic; Immune critical hits, paralysis, poison, sleep, stunning

OFFENSE

Speed fly 100 ft. (perfect)

Melee 2 claws +18 (1d6+1/19–20 plus 1d6 Wisdom)

Special Attacks find target, soul drain

TACTICS

During Combat The soul eater prefers to attack its assigned target character. If detected before it reaches its foe, it attempts to kill guards in order to complete its dark errand.

Morale The soul drinker fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 13, Dex 22, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 11, Cha 11

Base Atk +11; CMB +12; CMD 29 (cannot be tripped)

Feats Dodge, Flyby Attack, Improved Critical (claws), Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (claws)

Skills Acrobatics +17, Escape Artist +17, Fly +25, Intimidate +11, Knowledge (planes) +15, Perception +14, Stealth +20 (+30 in darkness or smoke)

Languages Daemonic

SQ caster link

SPECIAL ABILITIES

All-Around Vision (Ex) A soul eater's entire body functions as its eyes. This allows it to see in all directions at once. It cannot be flanked.

Caster Link (Ex) When a soul eater is summoned to the Material Plane, it creates a mental link between itself and the caster who summoned it. If the soul eater's assigned target dies before the soul eater can devour its soul, the soul eater returns at full speed to the caster and attacks him. Likewise, if the soul eater is defeated in battle (but not slain) by its target, the creature returns to the caster and attacks him. So long as both the caster and the soul eater are on the same plane of existence, the soul eater can successfully locate the caster using its find target ability. If the caster leaves the plane, the link is temporarily broken. Once the caster returns or the soul eater enters the plane the caster is now on, the link is immediately restored.

Find Target (Su) When ordered to find a creature, a soul eater does so unerringly, as though guided by a *locate creature* spell that has no maximum range and is not blocked by running water. The being giving the order must have seen the creature to be found and must speak the target's name (this limits Vordakai's choices to PCs whose name he knows learned through observation via his familiar).

Soul Drain (Su) When a soul eater reduces a foe to 0 Wisdom, it can devour that creature's soul as a standard action that provokes an attack of opportunity. The victim can resist having his soul drained by making a DC 17 Fortitude save. If he does, he is slain but can be restored to life normally. If the victim fails, he is immediately slain and his soul is consumed by the soul drinker. A victim slain in this manner cannot be returned to life through *clone*, *raise dead*, *reincarnation*, *resurrection*, *true resurrection*, or even a *miracle* or *wish*. The victim's soul remains within the essence of the soul eater forever—unless the soul eater is slain while the victim's body is within 30 feet and the victim has been dead for no more than 1 minute. In that case, the victim's soul returns to the body and restores it to life (although at –1 hit point). This is a death effect. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Wisdom Damage (Su) A creature hit by a soul eater's claw must succeed on a DC 17 Fortitude save or take 1d6 points of Wisdom damage. The save DC is Constitution-based.



Soul Eater

VORDAKAI'S TOMB

Vordakai's Tomb lies within a massive, 100-foot-tall, naturally formed stack that rises from the center of a small lake at area **W**. Its rooms and passageways are all hewn from limestone, following the natural cracks and seams in the stone, and many bear the linear and pictographic artwork of the ancient cyclops empire embossed in bas-relief. The entire structure of the tomb radiates faint transmutation magic—a DC 25 Knowledge (arcana) check correctly identifies this aura as a preservative magic intended to maintain the structure over the ages. While the magic won't protect against physical destruction, magical effects like *disintegrate*, or natural disaster, it does protect the ancient tomb from more subtle effects like erosion and time.

Ceilings within the tomb are arched, and are 10 feet high at the edges, rising to 15 feet high at the center of passages and 20 feet high in rooms unless otherwise noted. None of the rooms has a light source unless noted in the description. Secret doors can be discovered with a DC 25 Perception check; they are made of stone 2 feet thick and require a DC 20 Strength check to successfully open them. The doors are made of bronze and cannot be locked unless the text indicates otherwise.

W1. RIVER CROSSING

To the north, a jagged limestone cliff hems in the scene; a mighty waterfall rushes over the edge into a wide pool of black, frothing water. In the center of the black pool stands a massive, hundred-foot-tall limestone pillar of weathered stone—the last, lonely sentinel marking where the cliff's edge once stood in an age long past. At various points on the island's top, plumes of black smoke waft up into the sky.

The trail from area **X** leads up to this point on the Little Sellen River's bank. Anyone searching for tracks along the trail or the river bank can attempt a DC 25 Survival check. Success reveals a few signs of passage by at least three different creatures over the past several weeks. The oldest set appears to be a few human footprints. The next oldest appears to be a larger set of humanoid footprints (these were left by the undead cyclops now lurking at area **X**). The most recent, perhaps only a few days old, are of what appears to be an unshod horse (actually the centaur Xamanthe). The tracks are too old to establish where the creatures were going or to follow.

The plumes of black smoke rising from the top of the island are foul-smelling gasses emitted from a series of vents along the island's southern face. These are poisonous gasses escaping via several narrow fissures connected to area **W20**, but once the gasses escape into the air, their debilitating effects are lessened.

W2. LITTLE SELLEN RIVER

The Little Sellen River's average depth is 40 feet, but the black pool surrounding the island is much deeper. At its deepest point, the waters reach a depth of 120 feet.

W3. WYVERN BLUFFS (CR 8)

Limestone bluffs overlook the waterfall and the pool. Their surface is striated and pocked by years of weathering; it is crumbling in places and at some points supports creepers and other scrub foliage. Hundreds of bird nests exist in the tiny seams and nooks that dot the cliff face, and the air before the cliffs is constantly abuzz with the insects that dwell in the foliage and the wrens and starlings that feed on them.

The bluffs are 100 feet high and level off evenly with the top of the cairn stack. The face is unstable, crumbling, and rotten from long years of erosion, though it has many handholds (DC 20 Climb check to scale).

Creatures: A naturally eroded declivity widens at the bottom into a sheltered cave chamber here. It can be spotted from the lake or the central island with a DC 35 Perception check. This cave serves as the home for a mated pair of wyverns. Unless the PCs are stealthy when they approach the central island, the wyverns are swift to notice and swoop down to attack at some point when the PCs are relatively spread out, so the creatures can focus their violence on one or two foes at a time.

WYVERNS (2)

CR 6

XP 2,400

hp 73 each (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 282)

Treasure: Collected within the hollow are the wyvern's treasures. These include a tattered backpack holding a complete set of Ustalavic silverware worth 75 gp, a pouch holding 37 gp among other odds and ends, an old +3 *greatsword* stamped with the Issian coat-of-arms, and a messenger's parcel containing 5 green spinels worth 100 gp each.

W4. HIDDEN OVERLOOK

A natural cleft in the side of the tower of stone creates a sort of overlook here. The far wall contains a single stone door.

It's a 60-foot drop from here to the surface of the river, and the cleft in the rock itself is 10 feet high. The door in the back of the cleft is obscured by a curtain of vines and can only be noticed from outside with a DC 25 Perception check—remember to adjust this check for distance (it's a DC 31 Perception check to notice the entrance from the lake surface below).

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The stone door itself is warded by an *arcane lock* (CL 11th), but it is not otherwise protected.

W5. BEACH ENTRANCE (CR 3)

At the foot of the cliff, where the beach meets the limestone scarp, a dark opening in the stone beckons, partially obscured by creepers and dangling foliage.

A faint path in the mud is actually the remnants of the passage of three creatures over the past several weeks—Willas Gundarson, the undead cyclops that wandered out of the crypt down to area X, and the centaur Xamanthe. A DC 25 Survival check is enough to pick out hints of all three sets of prints.

W6. CAIRN ENTRANCE

This darkened passageway is decorated to the north and south with alcoves. Midway down the hall, just before the second set of alcoves is another archway carved in the stone. Upon its lintel are various runes and symbols. The northern alcove just

beyond this arch holds an ancient amphora that has broken open, spilling its contents into the corridor.

It was here that Willas Gundarson of Varnhold first laid eyes on the treasures of the cairn and chose to risk activating the tomb's defenses by taking something from them. A DC 20 Knowledge (arcana) check identifies the symbols on the archway as some sort of magical warding or alarm, though a DC 25 Knowledge (arcana) check reveals that the wards' power has already been expended. They were a part of the protections placed on the cairn both to alert the nearest dread zombie guardian and awaken Vordakai if any of his treasures were taken. Willas activated them when he rushed in and stole the jade "bracelet," but he fled the island before the guardian from area W7 could arrive (it has since left the cairn and now dwells in the Valley of the Dead at area X).

A DC 16 Survival check notes more tracks in the thick dust. The oldest prints (human) go up to the fallen amphora and then retreat back out of the tunnel toward the beach. The largest prints (undead cyclops) go in one direction, coming from area W7 and exiting at area W5. The hoof prints (the

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most recent, left by Xamanthe) also go only one direction, but these go deeper into the dungeon into area **W7**.

Around the corner toward area **W7**, a pile of rubble marks where a wall of stones once blocked the passage into area **W7**. A DC 15 Knowledge (engineering) or DC 25 Perception check is enough to note that the way the wall collapsed indicates that it was broken down by a powerful force from the north (the undead cyclops broke through the wall after the power of the tomb's wards was expended).

Treasure: The contents of the spilled amphora include 689 gp minted in the ancient cyclops empire and bearing the image of an all-seeing eye on the obverse and a clenched fist on the reverse. Buried among the spilled coinage is another jade "bracelet" just like the one described in Maestro Pendrod's notes—this piece of jewelry (actually a ring for a particularly large cyclops) is worth 200 gp.

W7. SEPULCHER (CR 8)

This diamond-shaped chamber vaults to a height of nearly thirty feet at the center of the room. Three wings branch off from the

center. One ends shortly at a wall of mortared stone, while the other two once bore walls that have since been broken down, revealing empty cobweb-shrouded alcoves holding stone biers.

When the centaur Xamanthe reached this room, she was immediately attacked by the chamber's guardian. She put up a good fight, but in the end she was defeated.

Creatures: Although one of the dread zombie cyclopes that stood guard in this room has since ended up in the Valley of the Dead, two remain here at their eternal post. One of these undead cyclopes stands in the northern alcove, while the other lurks in the walled-off western alcove. The northern zombie still bears fresh wounds caused by what appear to be sword slashes and kicks from a hoofed animal. This zombie immediately attacks anyone who enters the room, while the western one bashes through its wall (this takes 1d3 rounds) to join the fray or to replace the first zombie if it has fallen or pursued the intruders out of the tomb. Both zombies have been ordered by Vordakai to avoid killing intruders if possible—the zombies even attempt to stabilize unconscious and dying foes. The lich wants

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living creatures to interrogate (and eventually experiment upon)—the dead are still useful to him, but not as much. He checks this room once a day with his *oculus of Abaddon*, and if he sees new victims to collect, he gathers them up and returns with them to the third level above—such was the fate of Xamanthe, who is now imprisoned in area W15.

DREAD ZOMBIE CYCLOPES (2) **CR 6**
XP 2,400 each
hp 65, 44 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 52, Advanced Bestiary 105*)

W8. POOL STAIRS (CR 7)

This wide natural cavern seems to have been artificially enlarged in places. A vaulting ceiling nearly thirty feet above is replete with a forest of slowly dripping stalactites, while below a wide pool occupies the entire chamber save for a narrow rocky shelf hugging the cavern wall at the level of the river outside.

A submerged flight of steps descends under the western ledge of this room. They're immediately obvious to anyone underwater (although the silt and murk in the water reduces underwater sight to a limit of 10 feet)—it's a DC 15 Perception check to note the stairs from above water.

The stairs descend steeply for 20 feet before turning and entering a completely flooded 10-foot-high side tunnel to the west that leads to area W9.

The pool itself is 30 feet deep and has a 15-foot-diameter passage at its base that leads 140 feet north into the river basin. It is via this passageway that the pool's denizen comes and goes.

Creature: Inhabiting this pool for many years, living off the abundantly available eels, is a fabulously rare species of river elasmosaurus—more (and larger) versions of these creatures dwell in the lakes of the Stolen Lands, and they are responsible for the rumors of sea monsters in areas like Lake Silverstep, the Tuskwater, and Lake Hooktongue. The dinosaur is ferociously territorial, immediately attacking anyone who enters the water and pursuing foes onto land for short distances if needed.

ELASMOSAURUS **CR 7**
XP 3,200
hp 105 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 84*)

Treasure: With a DC 30 Perception check, a diver can find the calcified skeletal remains of a long-dead adventurer on the pool bed. Within a ruined belt pouch is a *silver raven*

figurine of wondrous power, while on the skeleton's hand sits a platinum and ruby ring of freedom of movement.

W9. POTTERY STORE

This oddly shaped chamber has stairs descending into cloudy water to the east and another set of stairs descending to a bronze double door to the southwest.

The pottery in here is of ancient cyclops make, elaborate pieces painted primarily in black and white and depicting lotus flowers, cities, and one-eyed humanoids engaged in everything from worship to fighting to athletic contests. Some even show vicious confrontations between these humanoids and centaurs. The humanoids are all portrayed in a distinctive stylistic manner with a wide-legged, sway-backed stance that can be identified with the ancient Casmar cyclops empire with a DC 30 Knowledge (history) check.

W10. RIVER TRAP (CR 9)

A ten-foot-high hallway extends at an angle from a bronze door, passing two shallow alcoves before reaching a square room. Standing in the side alcoves are two man-sized statues of painted stone depicting one-eyed humanoids. More of these statues stand in ranks within the room beyond.

The statues are of cyclops warriors clad in ancient Casmar style. Anyone entering this hallway and succeeding on a DC 28 Perception check notices the telltale points of a raised portcullis in a shadowy recess of the hall's ceiling just north of the alcoves. The backs of the alcoves themselves have sealed secret doors, unopened since the cairn was first excavated—they can only be detected with a DC 40 Perception check.

The 16 statues in the main room are identical to those in the alcoves. Twelve of them have been looted of their weapons and armor but retain their helms. The secret door in the south wall can be found with a DC 25 Perception check—opening this door reveals a bronze portcullis barring passage to a twisting stair that rises to the south. It's a DC 25 Strength check to lift this portcullis.

On the ceiling are arranged 16 very cleverly hidden circular doors, each just under 5 feet in diameter. It's a DC 20 Perception check to notice these doors before they open as part of the room's trap. Treat them as stone doors if the PCs attempt to force them open (hardness 8, hp 60, Break DC 28)—but note that if the room's trap hasn't been triggered, forcing one of these open triggers the trap.

Creatures: A single dread zombie cyclops stands in each alcove beyond the secret doors north of the room itself. These creatures remain motionless and silent until the

trap (described below) is triggered, at which point their doors open and they emerge, ready to attack any creatures they find.

DREAD ZOMBIE CYCLOPES (2)

CR 6

XP 2,400 each

hp 65, 44 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 52, *Advanced Bestiary* 105)

Trap: This entire room is a deadly and complex trap. When the southern secret door is opened, the trap is triggered. As soon as this occurs, the two portcullises to the north and south come crashing down, as numerous 5-foot-wide holes iris open in the ceiling. These holes connect to winding tunnels that connect to a second pair of apertures opening on the submerged side of the island outside; this allows the waters of the Little Sellen River to plunge down into this room, possibly damaging or knocking prone those in the square portion of the room itself (but not in the adjoining hallway).

The flood of water continues to fill area **W10**, swiftly filling this chamber completely and reaching the top of the stairs leading down from area **W9** or the first flight of those leading up at **W11** in a mere 10 rounds. Once the flooding begins, it cannot be stopped without completely blocking the 16 openings in the ceiling with effects like *wall of stone* or *stone shape*—the trap cannot be “reset” to close the openings.

Perhaps worse, a number of fish are pulled into the room as well—including one immense river eel. This monster takes 2d6 points of damage from its traumatic voyage. It arrives in area **W10** with a huge splash, whereupon it immediately begins attacking any sizable prey in the room, infuriated by its mishandling.

The room is completely flooded in 10 rounds, at which point the irises at both ends of the tunnels slam shut. Objects or creatures in either doorway when this occurs take 8d6 points of damage—a DC 15 Reflex save allows a creature or attended object to avoid the damage but only if it immediately shifts out of the doorway to one side or the other.

FLOODING ROOM

CR 8

XP 4,800

Type mechanical; Perception DC 20; Disable Device DC 28

EFFECTS

Trigger touch; **Onset Delay** 1 round; **Reset** none

Effect rushing water (targets directly under ceiling opening are knocked prone and take 2d6 bludgeoning per round; DC 20 Reflex avoids); room fills completely with water in 10 rounds (water increases in depth by 1 foot every round)

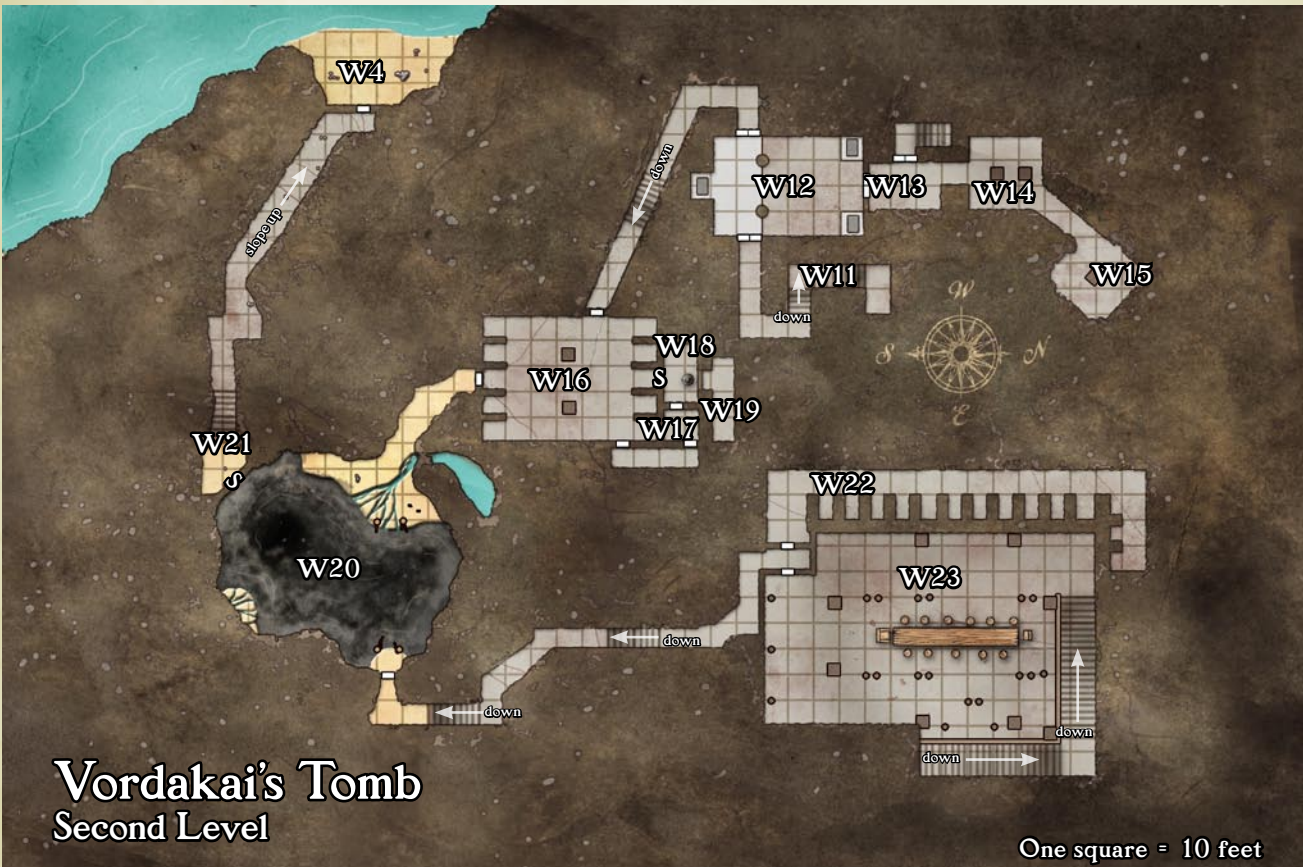
GIANT RIVER EEL

CR 5

XP 1,600

hp 52 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 119 [giant moray eel])

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Vordakai's Tomb Second Level

One square = 10 feet

W11. WINDING STAIR

This crooked stair is uneven and hewn from the living stone. It winds upward, apparently following a natural seam in the rock.

These stairs lead up to area **W12**.

W12. DAEMON SHRINE (CR 9)

To the north, this room is paved in patterned tiles of different-colored slate and subdivided by a pair of pillars carved in the likeness of leering fiends. Beyond them, friezes on the walls depict processions of animal-headed creatures marching along a black river's banks toward dual shrines in opposite corners of the chamber. These each depict a shadowy individual standing in a sinister longboat. Between them stands a bronze double door, its face decorated with a mosaic of a winding river crafted from obsidian tiles.

Vordakai revered the archdaemon known as Charon, the Horseman of Death. A DC 20 Knowledge (religion or planes) readily identifies the shrouded figure in the boat as Charon. Collectively, the Horsemen of the Apocalypse

fueled Vordakai's vision, but it was in death and Charon in which his true interests lay.

The southern shrine is a simple stone altar with an unlit oil lamp (empty). The northern shrines each consist of a large piece of quarried quartz upon which has been set an unlit oil lamp (fueled) and a shallow drinking cup stained with some dark residue (identifiable with a DC 15 Heal check as dried blood no more than a week old).

A DC 30 Knowledge (religion) check recognizes these dual altars as a relatively outdated and obscure form of worshipping Charon in which the smoke of the two shrine lamps symbolizes the rising spirits of the dead as they approach the River Styx. This check is enough to know that in these old temples, the lanterns were magical keys that helped to seal doorways.

Trap: If the north doors to area **W12** are opened without first lighting both northern shrine lamps, placing at least 10 hit points worth of fresh blood in each of the drinking cups, and either drinking it or boiling over the lamp flames, the quartz altars burst into freezing black fire that carries in it the taint of the River Styx.

STYGIAN FIRES	CR 9
XP 6,400	
Type magical; Perception DC 28; Disable Device DC 28	

EFFECTS

Trigger touch; **Bypass** ritual (see above); **Reset** automatic
Effect stygian fire (9d6 cold damage and 1d6 Wisdom damage, Reflex DC 20 halves cold damage and negates Wisdom damage), multiple targets (all creatures in area **W12**)

W13. FALSE STAIR

This chamber is rough-hewn, as if it were never fully finished. A bronze double door opens in one wall and a passage exits through another.

Once intended to be priestly quarters, these chambers were indeed never finished. The western doors open onto an unfinished stairway that climbs 30 feet and dead-ends at a stone wall.

W14. GUARD CHAMBER (CR 10)

The construction of this chamber differs from those seen previously. The ceiling reaches to a height of twenty feet overhead and appears to bear many fractures in the rock. In the center of the chamber, two columns of mortared stone support a ceiling of strange, delicate arches of stone.

Creature: As soon as any living creature enters this room, a dreadful summoned guardian appears in a burst of foul-smelling damp mist. This monstrosity is a piscodaemon—a neutral evil fiend from the swamps of Abaddon. Appearing as a hideous cross between lobster, octopus, and man, the piscodaemon speaks telepathically to the intruders, demanding to know in whose name they dare intrude upon the inner sanctum of the Horseman of Death. Any response that includes the name “Vordakai” is enough to persuade the piscodaemon to stand down. However, anyone who attempts to leave via this chamber with the prisoner from area **W15** in tow while the piscodaemon remains is automatically attacked—regardless of how many times Vordakai’s name is invoked. The piscodaemon can see invisible creatures—but other methods of hiding the prisoner from **W15** can fool it. Once summoned, the piscodaemon remains on guard at this post for 24 hours before returning to Abaddon.

PISCODAEMON

CR 10

XP 9,600

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NE Medium outsider (aquatic, daemon, evil, extraplanar)

Init +8; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., see *invisibility*; Perception +16

DEFENSE

AC 24, touch 14, flat-footed 20 (+4 Dex, +10 natural)

hp 137 (11d10+77)

Fort +14, **Ref** +7, **Will** +9

DR 10/good; **Immune** acid, death effects, disease, poison;

Resist cold 10, electricity 10, fire 10; **SR** 21

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., swim 50 ft.

Melee 2 claws +19 (2d6+7/18–20/x3 plus grab and 1d6 bleed), tentacles +17 (1d10+3 plus poison)

Special Attacks constrict (2d6+10)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 11th; concentration +14)

Constant—see *invisibility*

At will—*dispel magic*, *greater teleport* (self plus 50 lbs. of objects only)

3/day—*fly*, *stinking cloud* (DC 16)



Piscodaemon

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1/day—summon (level 4, 1d3 hydrodaemons 35%; not usable at this time)

TACTICS

During Combat The piscodaemon attacks well-armored foes in preference to spellcasters, for it knows that making a melee fighter staggered with its poison is more crippling than the same effect applied to a spellcaster—it trusts its spell resistance and other defenses to protect it from most magical attacks. If reduced to fewer than 50 hit points, the daemon casts *stinking cloud* on itself—it's immune to the spell's poison effect and hopes to slow down its attackers with this tactic. (Note that since this piscodaemon is itself summoned, it cannot use its own summon ability.)

Morale The piscodaemon fights to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 25, **Dex** 18, **Con** 24, **Int** 14, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 17

Base Atk +11; **CMB** +18; **CMD** 32

Feats Critical Focus, Improved Initiative, Multiattack, Power Attack, Sickening Critical, Vital Strike

Skills Escape Artist +18, Intimidate +17, Knowledge (planes) +16, Perception +16, Sense Motive +16, Stealth +18, Survival +16, Swim +29

Languages Abyssal, Draconic, Infernal; telepathy 100 ft.

SQ amphibious

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Poison (Ex) Tentacles—injury; *save* Fort DC 14; *frequency* 1/round for 6 rounds; *effect* 1d2 Con plus staggered for 1 round; *cure* 2 consecutive saves.

W15. PRISON

Engaged masonry columns form shallow alcoves around a central pillar in this flat-roofed chamber. Manacles hang from the walls near ancient bloodstains.

Creature: Slumped in the eastern corner of this room is Vordakai's latest prisoner—the curious Nomen centaur Xamanthe Silverfire, daughter of war-priestess Aecora Silverfire. After she was defeated and captured by the dread zombie in area **W7**, Vordakai used *dimension door* to enter that room, gathered the unconscious victim up, and then used *dimension door* to bring her to this prison. After ensuring the centaur was under the effects of his paralysis touch, he stayed long enough to mock her before leaving her to her pain.

Xamanthe remains paralyzed, her mind in a semi-delirious state brought on by malnourishment and fear. Once every few days or so, a dread zombie cyclops arrives with a pan of watery gruel and feeds her—just enough to prevent her from dying of thirst or starvation, but far from enough to allow her to recover from her trials. Xamanthe has learned to fear these visits as she can barely manage the reflexive act of swallowing the vile stuff

Freeing her from paralysis may prove difficult if the PCs don't have access to a *remove paralysis* spell. Any effect that removes curses can free her from the lich's paralysis effect, although such effects are not guaranteed to work (it's a DC 25 caster level check to remove this effect with *remove curse*). *Freedom of movement* restores Xamanthe's mobility, but only as long as the effect lasts—giving her the *ring of freedom of movement* from area **W8** is another way to rescue her.

If she's rescued, Xamanthe can describe how she broke her tribe's taboos and disobeyed her mother's commands to investigate the Valley of the Dead and the strange pathway leading up into the mountains. She ruefully admits her curiosity got the better of her but stubbornly says that she'd do the same if she had the chance again—though she'd be a bit more cautious about fighting undead cyclopes! After she was defeated by the cyclops in area **W7**, she has only flashes of memories—periodic visits by other undead cyclopes who brought her foul-tasting food, pain-filled dreams and nightmares, and a growing sense of despair. She does say that she has a particularly disturbing memory of a nearly skeletal cyclops with a glowing gem wedged in his otherwise-empty eye socket, who whispered the following to her at some point during her ordeal after she'd been imprisoned here: "You should be honored to be a guest of Vordakai, beastwoman. I shall return once your fear and dread drive all semblance of will and self from your mind, at which point you will thank me for these gifts of pain." Xamanthe is relatively certain this hateful creature is the one who paralyzed her, but she knows little more apart from the fact that the name the creature claimed is the same as one used by her tribe as a sort of ancestral, legendary boogeyman.

If invited, she readily joins the PCs in helping them explore the tomb, but she knows she may well be out of her depth here and without an invitation asks only for an escort back to area **W1**—from there, she's confident she can make the return journey to her tribe (provided, of course, she receives healing). She has no gear to offer the PCs in reward, but she does describe to them her magic flail and says that they are welcome to keep it if they find it, wherever it may have ended up in this tomb. (Her *+1 cold iron magical beast bane flail* is currently amid the other treasures in area **W27**.)

XAMANTHE SILVERFIRE

CR 3

XP 800

Female centaur (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 42)

hp 30 (currently has 25 points of nonlethal damage)

W16. CENTRAL CRYPT (CR 9)

This chamber's walls are composed of burial alcoves. All are empty save for small stone shelf ledges holding assorted bits of pottery.

This was the main burial chamber for Vordakai's minions. All of them were roused when the cairn was violated by Willas Gundarson and have since emerged from their places of repose.

Creatures: Vordakai has used planar binding to place a pair of soul eaters in this chamber as guardians—the eerie monsters float near the central pillars and swiftly move to attack any living creatures that enter the room.

SOUL EATERS (2) **CR 7**

XP 3,200 each

hp 82 each (see page 36)

W17. VESTIBULE

The walls of this chamber are covered in lime plaster and bear a series of frescoes whose colors are still vibrant. This artwork depicts one-eyed humanoids rendered in the same sway-backed style.

The frescoes are all in the ancient cyclops style and show scenes relevant to Vordakai's life millennia ago. They provide glimpses into the ancient cyclops culture and would be of great interest to a historian seeking more information about ancient Iobaria's culture. A description or copy of these frescos can serve to satisfy Tamerak Elenark's request for such information (see inside back cover).

W18. SACRISTY

A stone bench sits at shoulder height against the far wall of this chamber. Upon this bench lie a number of stone vessels and bronze tools. A man-sized statue of a sway-backed humanoid, a hand is clamped over its single eye, stands against the north wall.

This chamber was used to prepare the dead for interment and houses an assortment of funerary tools and items, though none are of particular value other than as antiquities. The secret door behind the statue can be found with a DC 20 Perception check. This secret door is locked with both an excellent mundane lock and an *arcane lock* (CL 11th)—it's a DC 40 Disable Device check to pick the lock or a DC 38 Strength check to bash down the door.

W19. OCULUS FOCUS

This chamber is empty. Its walls bear eye-shaped patterns and carvings, all of which seem to be looking at a point on the east

wall where a single carving of a giant, stylized eye looms. The eye's pupil is an intricately engraved relief roughly the size of the palm of a hand.

The eye carving to the east radiates strong conjuration and divination magic. The eye carving is actually part of a specialized teleportation circle linked to the *oculus of Abaddon* carried by Vordakai. If the *oculus of Abaddon* eyepiece is placed in the engraving's pupil (or if its current wearer merely touches the pupil), the entire chamber becomes a temporary *teleportation circle* and transports everyone within into area **W25** instantly.

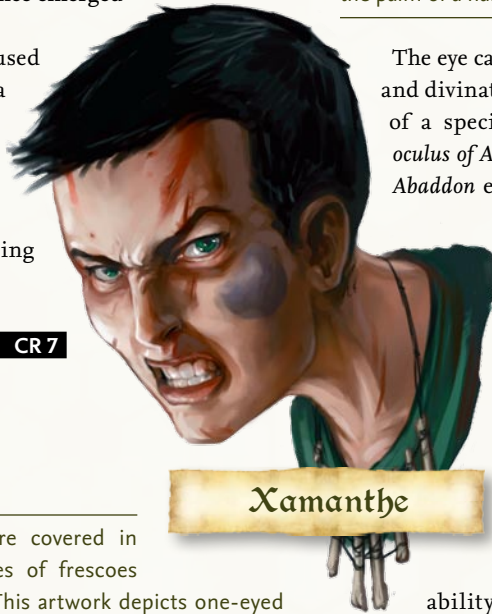
If the eye carving is destroyed (hardness 16, hp 120), the *oculus of Abaddon* cracks inside of Vordakai's eye socket. This sends a searing jolt of pain through the lich's mind, inflicting him with a permanent 20% arcane spell failure chance and removing the *oculus's* ability to use *true seeing* and familiar farsight.

In this event, Vordakai immediately mobilizes and seeks out the PCs after casting his preparatory spells as detailed in area **W27**—he uses *dimension door* to enter this room and then begins tracking down the PCs from there.

W20. HELL POOL (CR 8)

This wide chamber appears to have been naturally formed; its ceiling rises 25 feet and is festooned with stalactites. The stink of sulfur and tar are strong, as a huge lake of bubbling black tar dominates the chamber. From rock outcrops here and there on the walls bubble small springs of milky-looking water. Across the chamber, a stony shelf provides purchase for a door stoop before a black wooden door swollen in its frame. The broken stumps of two support posts protrude from the rock of the shelf as well as that of the main entrance near the pool's edge, showing where a wooden bridge once spanned the inky soup.

This chamber is horrifically inhospitable to living creatures. The tar pool is boiling hot—each round of contact inflicts 1d6 points of fire damage, and total immersion inflicts 10d6 fire damage per round. Each round after a creature takes damage from the tar, it suffers half that amount of damage each round for 3 more rounds. A small blob of tar can be removed as a full-round action, but a creature that was immersed in it can only avoid the damage by removing the sticky tar with universal solvent. After the tar burns for 3 rounds, it cools to a thick layer that effectively reduces the creature's Dexterity by 4 points—it takes 2d4 minutes to peel the tar off.



Xamanthe

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A creature can slog through the tar each round it makes a DC 20 Strength check as a full-round action—success means the creature can move at a speed of 5 feet. The tar itself is too thick to be navigated by a swim speed, but a burrow speed works normally in it. *Freedom of movement* allows a creature to navigate the pool of tar with ease as if swimming in water. The pool is only 1 foot deep—below this layer, the tar is thick and vicious enough to support weight.

Making matters worse, the air in this chamber is hideously noxious. Every round a creature breathes the air in the room, it must make a DC 15 Fortitude saving throw—failure indicates the creature is nauseated for 1 round. A saving throw of a natural 1 results in 1d4 points of Constitution damage from the toxic air. This is a poison effect. The foul air itself seeps up into area **W21**, but otherwise does not hamper the rest of the complex as it drifts up through narrow fissures in the rock to vent out of the top of the island's southern face.

A secret door in the southern wall can be discovered with a DC 20 Perception check—there's no easy way to reach it without slogging through the tar, unfortunately. A bridge did indeed once allow easier access over the pool to the eastern door, but over time the volatile nature of the room overcame the complex's preservative magic and caused the bridge to deteriorate away.

Creature: While some of Varnhold's citizens have perished since their abduction, others who endured Vordakai's necromantic tortures and interrogations were not so lucky. One such doomed soul was the wizard Cephal Lorentus, who now serves Vordakai in undeath as a dread zombie. In life, Cephal was a middle-aged, bearded man of above average height. In death, his flesh is foul and blackened, in part due to the fact that he's been charged with guarding this room from intruders. He still wears tatters of his wizardly robes, and his jaw hangs slack where it was broken by Vordakai's crushing grip as he was strangled to death (he is still capable of hissing out speech or verbal components for his spells, though). Cephal stands motionless on the ledge before the door to the east, impassively watching the room and waiting with endless patience for enemies to act against.

Due to the inhospitable nature of this room, Cephal's CR is increased. If the PCs manage to lure him out of this room and attack him elsewhere, don't reduce his CR to compensate when you hand out XP, since the act of luring the undead wizard into safer terrain is worth the extra XP reward in and of itself.

CEPHAL LORENTUS

CR 8
XP 4,800

 Male dread zombie human wizard 7 (*Advanced Bestiary* 105)

NE Medium undead (human)

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +1

DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 12, flat-footed 20 (+4 armor, +2 deflection, +4 shield)

hp 66 (7d6+42)

Fort +6, **Ref** +2, **Will** +8

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +2; **Immune** undead traits

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +1 dagger +6 (1d4+3/19–20), bite +0 (1d6+1)

Special Attacks brain consumption, command zombies, hand of the apprentice (5/day)

Wizard Spells Prepared (CL 7th; concentration +9)

 4th—*fire shield*

 3rd—*fireball* (DC 15), *fly*

 2nd—*acid arrow*, *glitterdust* (DC 14), *mirror image*, *scorching ray*

 1st—*burning hands* (DC 13), *mage armor*, *magic missile* (2), *shield*

 0 (at will)—*bleed* (DC 12), *dancing lights*, *message*, *touch of fatigue* (DC 12)

TACTICS

Before Combat Cephal casts *fly*, *mage armor*, *shield*, and *fire shield* if he has a chance to do so before combat begins.

He then flies to the cavern ceiling to use the stalactites as cover.

During Combat Cephal remains near the ceiling as long as possible, targeting his magic at spellcasters and characters using ranged weapons. He casts *glitterdust* on those making ranged attacks. If he depletes his ranged attacks and hand of the apprentice uses, he swoops down to finish the fight with his dagger and bite attacks.

Morale Cephal fights until destroyed.

STATISTICS

Str 14, **Dex** 11, **Con** —, **Int** 14, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 18

Base Atk +3; **CMB** +5; **CMD** 17

Feats Arcane Strike, Combat Casting, Craft Wondrous Item, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Scribe Scroll, Toughness

Skills Handle Animal +11, Knowledge (arcana) +12, Knowledge (geography) +12, Knowledge (nature) +12, Survival +8

Languages Common, Draconic, Giant, Hallit, Sylvan

SQ arcane bond (dagger)

Gear +1 dagger, ring of protection +2, spell component pouch, spellbook (contains all cantrips and currently prepared spells)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Brain Consumption (Ex) If Cephal deals damage with his bite attack against a helpless or pinned living foe, the bitten creature must make a DC 15 Fortitude save or be reduced to a negative hit point total equal to 1 lower than his current Constitution as Cephal begins to consume the victim's brain. If Cephal bites a foe who already has negative hit points, he automatically kills the foe by eating his brain. The save DC is Strength-based.

Command Zombies (Su) Cephal can automatically command all normal zombies within 30 feet as a free action. Normal zombies never attack Cephal unless compelled.

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W21. SECONDARY ENTRANCE

Hewn stairs rise to the west from this room, and the air is foul with the stink of sulfur and tar.

The air in this room and the hallway leading up to area **W4** to the west is foul smelling, identical to the air quality in area **W20**.

W22. SECONDARY CRYPTS (CR 7)

This crypt stretches into darkness. The floor of this crypt is strewn with rubble and the filth of opened graves. Sprawled on the floor is a fairly fresh corpse of a middle-aged Ulfen man, no more than a week or two old at the most.

These secondary crypts held additional servants of Vordakai, not all of whom were converted into dread zombies. Their bones lie scattered upon the floor. The Ulfen corpse is none other Willas Gundarson, who recovered from Vordakai's beckoning enchantment just as the feasting began in room **W23**. He retreated here and fought valiantly for his life with nothing more than the hunting knife at his belt but ultimately fell to the ravenous undead cyclops zombies.

Creature: A combination of horror at the fate of his fellow colonists and guilt over his role in bringing it about caused Willas's mind to snap as he finally fell to his attackers. His troubled soul now haunts the crypt as a spectre. He does not leave this chamber but mercilessly attacks anything that enters—he has no memories of life, and seethes now only with a mad hatred of the living. The spectre fights until destroyed.

WILLAS GUNDARSON CR 7

XP 3,200

Spectre (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 256)

hp 52

W23. FEASTHALL (CR 10)

This door opens onto a short dais looking out over a large chamber. Thick pillars ascend to a twenty-foot-high ceiling, while a wide stone staircase climbs to a darkened gallery above. The true purpose of the chamber is apparent from the great stone table running across its center. Dozens of

seats have been set about this massive affair and propped upon them is a feast of horror. Each chair holds the corpse of a human locked in its death throes, its mouth agape in anguish, the top of its cranium brutally removed, and the brains within excised.

The dead bodies comprise no less than 33 of Varnhold's colonists, identifiable as such with a DC 20 Knowledge (local) check from their clothing and, perhaps, a few recognizable faces if the PCs have had visitors to their nation from Varnhold. The body seated at the head of the table is that of Maegar Varn himself. Also present is a corpse wearing the trappings of a priest of the faith of

Erastil—Maegar's longtime companion, the cleric Caspar Morgarion. All of these poor souls are victims of the cyclops lich Vordakai. Unlike his dread zombie minions (who are compelled to feed out of their necromantic nature), Vordakai feeds on the brains of the recently dead not to satisfy an aberrant hunger for flesh but out of a darker hunger for knowledge. Although consuming the brain of a living creature doesn't grant the lich increases to its mental ability scores or other quantifiable boons, he does have the ability to absorb snatches and bits of memory from those he feeds upon—yet another way in which he is fitting himself to the new world he has found himself in.

Creatures: Guarding this chamber are four dread zombie cyclopes. When they notice the PCs, the undead cyclopes spread out and attack—fighting until destroyed and pursuing until the end.

DREAD ZOMBIE CYCLOPES (4) CR 6

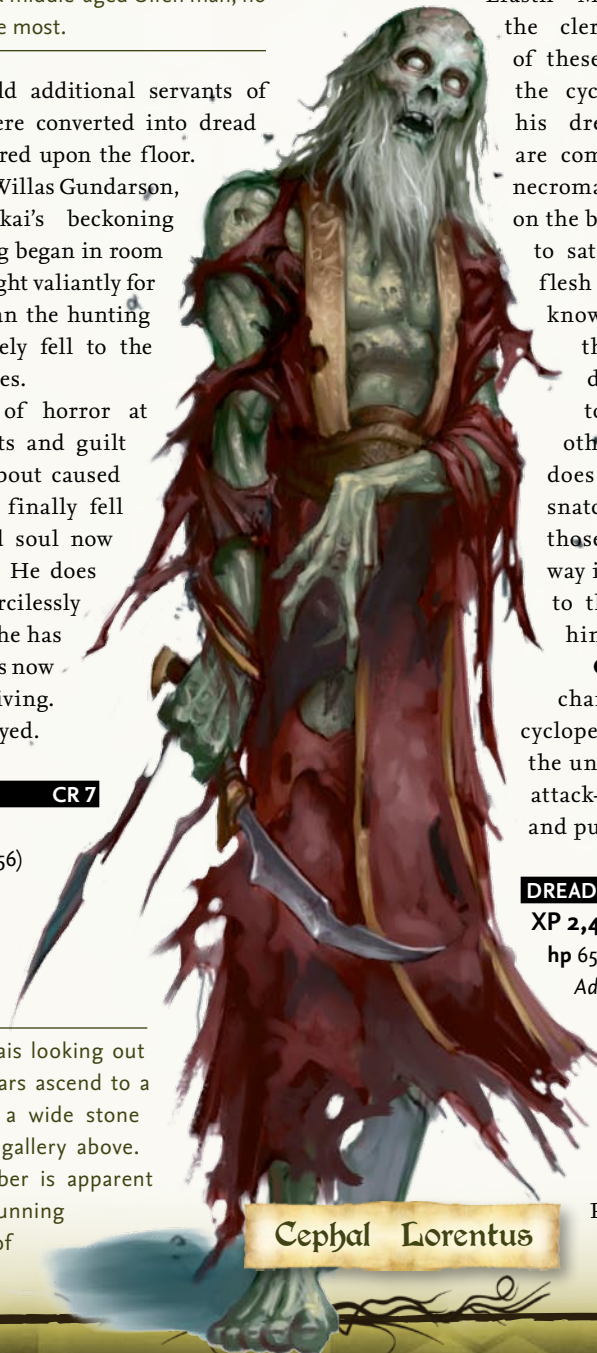
XP 2,400 each

hp 65 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary* 52,

Advanced Bestiary 105)

W24. BALCONY

This balcony has no rail—it overlooks room **W23**, 30 feet below. The secret door to area **W26** can be found with a DC 25 Perception check.



Cephal Lorentus

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W25. OCLUS CHAMBER

This octagonal chamber, which vaults to a twenty-foot-high ceiling, is composed of multiple slabs of opaque, white crystal fitted together to form a dome in the distinctive shape of an inverted eye, its gaze focused into the room below. This white crystal gleams with a subdued moonlike glow. The walls of the chamber are covered with arcane symbols, stylized line art, and images of cyclopes. A twenty-foot-diameter circle is incised into the stone of the floor directly beneath the great eye-shaped dome.

This chamber of fate and fortune is sacred to the archdaemons of Abaddon and has existed longer even than the tomb itself, which are the central reasons Vordakai chose this site. His only change to the room was to eradicate the previous wall carvings and replace them with the current designs—the original carvings were too horrid for even the cyclopes to stomach. This room is where Vordakai discovered the *oculus of Abaddon*—and it is the original force behind Vordakai's descent from cruelty into true evil.

The Oculus Chamber radiates an aura of overwhelming conjuration and divination and serves as a focal point of daemonic energies in ways that even Vordakai does not yet fully understand.

W26. POOL GUARDIAN (CR 9)

A burbling fountain and pool that stink of sulfur occupy the center of this chamber. A shallow channel cut into the stone of the floor passes beneath a pair of bronze double doors, funneling the foul-smelling water out of the pool to the east.

The chamber, the foyer to Vordakai's throne room, possesses another naturally occurring sulfur spring, though this one is not contaminated like those in area **W20**. The water is actually fairly safe to drink but tastes horrible and requires a DC 10 Fortitude save to avoid being sickened for 10 minutes. The pool is 10 feet deep.

Creature: Dwelling within this sulfur pool is an elemental creature twisted by the archdaemons an age ago and left here as a guardian—a neutral evil greater water elemental that obeys the commands of anyone who wears the *oculus of Abaddon*. Vordakai has commanded it to attack anyone who enters the chamber—if he dominates a PC, he takes a moment to inform the elemental that this victim is to be allowed to pass unmolested as well. Otherwise, the elemental fights to the death.

GREATER WATER ELEMENTAL

CR 9

XP 6,400

hp 123 (*Pathfinder RPG Bestiary 127*)

W27. THRONE OF BONES (CR 13)

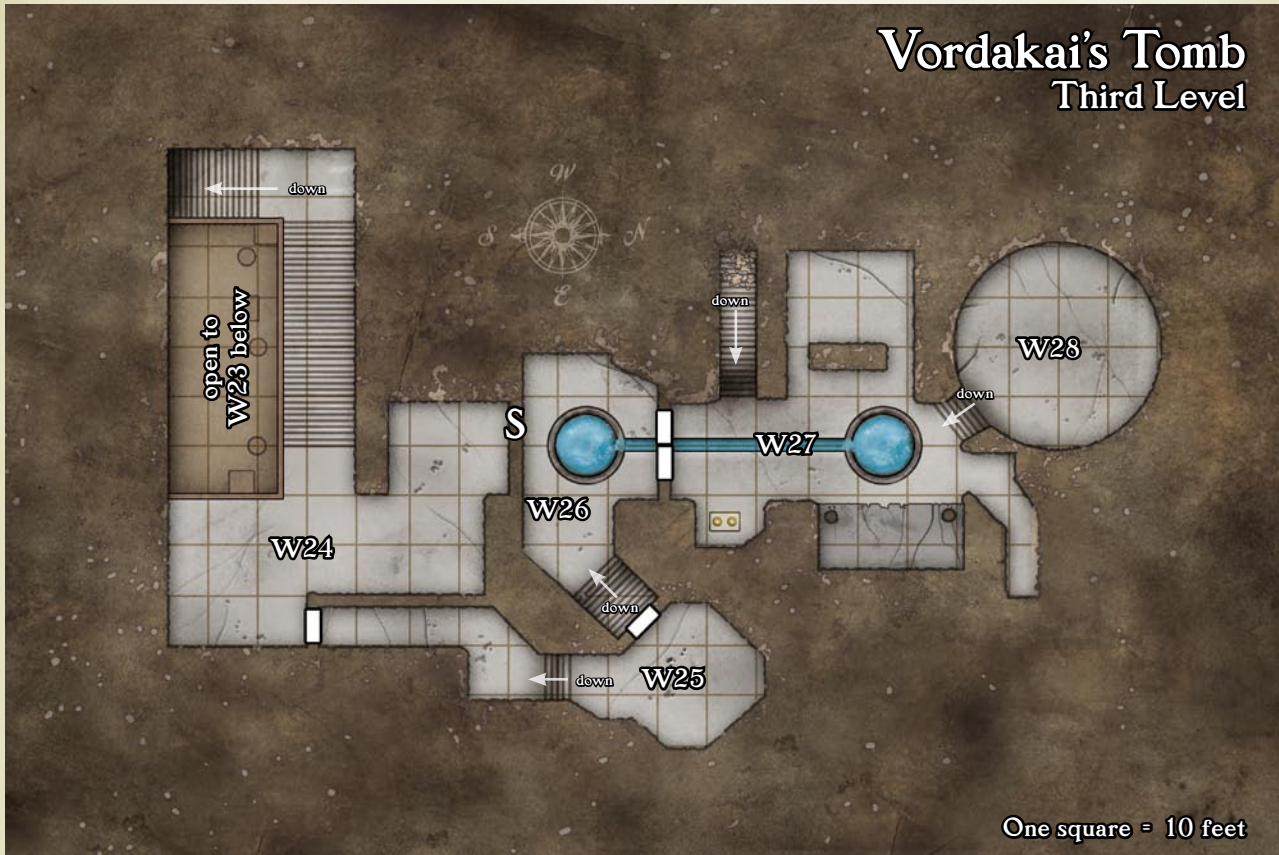
This chamber stretches forward into darkness. A channel of sulfurous water runs down the center of the chamber into a placid pool tinged in red and surrounded by kneeling forms. Nearby sits a small stone shrine decorated with several freshly severed human heads. Just beyond this grisly altar, a hideous throne made of bones looms above the pool.

This is Vordakai's throne room—the chamber wherein he slept for countless ages and where he now toils on new plans of destruction at the behest of visions granted by the Four Horsemen. The stairwell once led to the top of the cairn but is now collapsed and useless. A DC 25 Knowledge (religion) check identifies the shrine as being dedicated to the Four Horsemen—the heads are recently “released” Varnhold victims. Their bodies are the forms huddled around the central pool, eviscerated such that their entrails are laid out in intricate patterns sacred to Vordakai's daemonic overlords.

The chamber to the north consists of Vordakai's library and laboratory. Here, the PCs can find numerous stone tablets, crumbling scrolls, and even some strangely intact ancient tomes, all of which concern the worship of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse and methods by which to engineer great disasters in the world to feed their insatiable gluttony for souls. Among these records are several newer notes concerning Vordakai's confusion about how the world has changed in the last 10,000 or so years, his frustration at having forgotten so much of his knowledge and wizardly skills in that span of time, and his desire to learn more about this new world before he attempts to resurrect his empire. The abduction of Varnhold to use their citizens as research tools is but the first step in this mission—it should be obvious to anyone who studies the information here that, while it would be many years before Vordakai was in a position where he was ready to attempt his plans for the world, if the lich had been left to his own devices he could have swiftly become a terrible danger to both Brevoy and the River Kingdoms—and perhaps beyond. All of these notes are written in Cyclops.

Creatures: Vordakai sits upon his throne of bones in this chamber, staring into his bloody oracular pool and arrogantly awaiting the PCs while he pores over one of his tomes and puzzles out the mysteries of this strange new world he's awakened into. Over the past 10,000 years of torpor, Vordakai has retained only a fraction of his original power. Though he was a 20th-level wizard at the time of his imprisonment, his power has since degraded to that of a 9th-level wizard. Although atrophied, Vordakai remains a very dangerous opponent who, on his own, can devastate a poorly prepared party. Don't be afraid to play Vordakai as an arrogant creature—he has existed for longer than most

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creatures on Golarion, after all, and if he makes arrogant mistakes (such as neglecting to cast spells defensively and provoking attacks of opportunity), that not only gives the PCs a chance to survive but also helps to establish the ancient lich as both overconfident and a bit unhinged from his long period of quiescence. Of course, this adventure also provides several magic items intended to aid the PCs against the monster, such as magical blunt weapons and the *ring of freedom of movement*—if you find your PCs are doing well against Vordakai, feel free to abandon his arrogance in favor of more lethal tactics. The thing to keep in mind is that this creature is the most powerful foe the PCs have yet encountered in Kingmaker, and by defeating him they will accomplish something truly legendary.

VORDAKAI CR 12

XP 19,200

Male cyclops atrophied lich wizard 9 (*Pathfinder Bestiary* 188)

NE Large undead (augmented)

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft., low-light vision, *true seeing*;

Perception +41

DEFENSE

AC 26, touch 11, flat-footed 26 (+4 armor, +2 deflection,

+7 natural, +4 shield, -1 size)

hp 175 (19 HD; 10d8+9d6+99)

Fort +14, **Ref** +11, **Will** +19

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +4; **DR** 15/bludgeoning and magic; **Immune** cold, electricity, undead traits

Weaknesses atrophied

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee touch +15 (1d8+9/19–20 plus paralysis)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Special Attacks channel negative energy (DC 17, 8/day), paralysis (permanent, DC 25)

Arcane School Spell-Like Abilities (CL 9th; concentration +14) 8/day—grave touch (4 rounds)

Wizard Spells Prepared (CL 9th; concentration +14)

5th—*dominate person* (DC 21), *quicken shield*, *waves of fatigue*

4th—*bestow curse* (DC 19), *dimension door* (2), *phantasmal killer* (DC 19)

3rd—*dispel magic*, *displacement*, *suggestion* (DC 19), *tongues*, *vampiric touch*

2nd—*blindness/deafness* (DC 17), *detect thoughts* (2, DC 17), *false life*, *ghoul touch* (DC 17), *resist energy*

1st—*charm person* (DC 17), *chill touch*, *comprehend languages*, *grease*, *mage armor*, *ray of enfeeblement* (2, DC 16)

0 (at will)—*arcane mark*, *bleed* (DC 15), *detect magic*, *read magic*, *touch of fatigue* (DC 15)

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Opposition Schools evocation, transmutation

TACTICS

Before Combat Before engaging in combat, Vordakai casts *false life*, *mage armor*, and *tongues* on himself.

During Combat Vordakai casts quickened *shield* on the first round of combat (adjust his AC down by 4 if the PCs attack him before he acts as a result) and activates the oculus's *true seeing* as he casts *waves of fatigue* against the largest group of foes. He trusts to his damage reduction to protect him from most damage, using his spells and channeling negative energy in melee. He resorts to his touch attack against foes who seem to be able to hurt him easily. When he's reduced to fewer than 60 hit points, he uses *dimension door* to retreat to area **W19**, whereupon he uses his touch and negative energy to heal all of his damage, then uses *dimension door* to return to this room to begin the fight anew.

Morale Vordakai is not willing to abandon his lair to intruders—as a result, he does not flee from combat in this chamber, and it is here that his ultimate fate shall be decided.

STATISTICS

Str 21, **Dex** 10, **Con** —, **Int** 20, **Wis** 17, **Cha** 16

Base Atk +11; **CMB** +17; **CMD** 29

Feats Combat Casting, Command Undead, Craft Magic

Arms and Armor, Craft Wondrous Item, Defensive Combat Training, Great Fortitude, Improved Critical (touch),

Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Quicken Spell, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (enchantment), Toughness, Vital Strike

Skills Fly +20, Intimidate +25, Knowledge (arcana) +27, Knowledge (planes) +18, Knowledge (religion) +27, Perception +41, Sense Motive +33, Spellcraft +27, Use Magic Device +13

Languages Abyssal, Cyclops, Giant, Infernal; *tongues*

SQ flash of insight, arcane bond (raven), life sight (10 feet, 9 rounds/day)

Gear *cloak of resistance* +3, *headband of mental prowess* (+2 Int, +2 Cha, grants ranks in Knowledge [planes]), *oculus of Abaddon*, *ring of protection* +2, *soul jar*, phylactery (worth 3,500 gp if sold as an art object but worth considerably more to Vordakai)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Atrophied Lich (Ex) A lich that remains immobile and insensible for extended periods of time (as Vordakai did after he was imprisoned in his tomb just prior to Earthfall 10,000 years ago) can grow atrophied. The exact effects of atrophy vary from lich to lich. In Vordakai's case, his effective wizard level has declined from 20th to 9th. Note that these are not negative levels—Vordakai must earn back the lost XP normally.

More troubling to the lich is the fact that until he achieves at least 11th level as a lich, his phylactery is unusable—if he is destroyed, he crumbles to dust, forever dead.

Treasure: Vordakai keeps his treasures nearby, in neatly organized mounds and piles behind his throne. The majority of this treasure consists of ancient coins

(1,140 pp, 13,000 gp, and 103,000 sp) and various art objects altogether worth an additional 19,500 gp. In addition to the ancient treasures, several magic items Vordakai found on his victims can be found here. These include a *ring of friend shield* (the match to the one found in the village), a *ring of protection* +2, a *cloak of resistance* +1, *gloves of swimming and climbing*, a pouch holding three packets of *dust of dryness*, and a +1 *cold iron magical beast bane flail*. Of course, the bulk of Vordakai's treasure consists of the 42 soul jars he keeps in area **W28**.

Perhaps an even greater treasure can be found in the northern room that serves as Vordakai's laboratory. The preserved knowledge of ancient Casmaron is contained in dozens of stone tablets weighing nearly 1,000 pounds in all—but the tablets are worth 10,000 gp to a scholar of this ancient land. In addition, while many of Vordakai's spellbooks have crumbled, enough fragments remain here to please any wizard. All of the spells Vordakai has prepared are present, along with up to six additional spells of each level up through 9th of your choice—feel free to tailor this cache of spells as befits your campaign's needs.

W28. DUNGEON OF SOULS

The walls of this dome-ceilinged room are filled with stone niches, each bearing a number of strangely shaped glass jars. Each jar is about a foot tall, is stoppered with a clot of black wax, and contains a swirling plume of glowing white smoke—there are dozens of these jars on display, and the swirling light each emits gives this chamber an otherworldly feel.

Each of the jars on the shelves here is a *soul jar*—a cruel device often used by night hags, necromancers, and other creatures eager to collect and transport the souls of living creatures. *Soul jars* are described at the end of this adventure.

In all, there are 42 *soul jars* in this room, each holding the soul of a citizen of Varnhold. Vordakai has already dealt with the majority of the village's higher-level citizens, so most of those trapped here are lower-level commoners and experts—only one, **Maestro Ervil Pendrod** (LN male human bard 5) is notable. A character who touches a *soul jar* can communicate telepathically with the soul trapped inside—by breaking or opening a *soul jar*, the jar becomes nonmagical and disgorges its trapped soul in a plume of smoke, reforming into the trapped victim's body physically in the same condition he or she was in when he was captured.

The prisoners are extremely grateful if rescued and very confused about how they got here. While mournful for those among their number who have already been slain (particularly their leader Maegar Varn), they remain quite anxious to escape this prison and return to Varnhold.

Treasure: While the *soul jars* are all in use (and thus worthless as magic items), evil PCs could use the trapped souls as treasure if they wished. The prices they could get for a trapped soul varies, depending on the needs and desires of the purchaser, but the souls trapped in these jars are relatively low level—and as a result not as desirable. A price of 5,000 gp per soul isn't unreasonable—but if the PCs decide to get into the soul-selling business and word spreads, their kingdom gains 1d6 points of Unrest per soul they've sold. Trafficking in souls is an evil act and should have alignment repercussions for nonevil PCs. Note that selling off the souls of Varnhold prevents the PCs from being able to annex and expand their kingdom as detailed under "Annexing Varnhold."

Of more palatable use is the empty *portable hole* folded up and tucked almost as an afterthought on a shelf near the door—it was with this device that Vordakai transported his vast collection of *soul jars* to Varnhold and harvested the residents of the town.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

With the destruction of Vordakai and most (if not all) of his monstrous minions, an ancient threat has finally been expunged from the Stolen Lands. This is far from a minor accomplishment—not only do the surviving villagers of Varnhold swiftly pledge their loyalty to the PCs and their nation, but the Nomen centaurs are impressed as well and vow to live peacefully with the human settlers in deference to the great work the PCs have accomplished. All they ask is that they be left the Dunsward itself as their own territory. If the PCs have also rescued Xamanthe, the tribe may have further rewards for the PCs (see the quest on page 35). In any event, the PCs have accomplished something neither Taldor nor Brevoy could achieve—peace with the Nomen centaurs.

As for Brevoy to the north, events continue to escalate as tensions between Issia and Rostland grow. The swordlords of Restov will soon officially sever all contact with their agents in the Stolen Lands, leaving the PCs truly on their own. Yet with their new allies and the sudden growth in their kingdom, they may find that they no longer need Brevoy's aid. Indeed... Brevoy may need to turn its attention south before long as the PCs' nation becomes a true kingdom.

To the west, another kingdom is most assuredly not ignoring the growing power in the eastern Stolen Lands. Self-proclaimed King Irrovetti of Pitax has already defeated and displaced the Brevic agents that dared attempt to colonize the Glenebon Uplands and the Slough, and as the PCs' nation grows, so does Irrovetti's jealousy—jealousy destined some day soon to ignite a new war in the River Kingdoms, where blood will be traded for blood until only one King rules the Stolen Lands.



Vordakai

ANNEXING VARNHOLD

With the rescue of 40-odd citizens of Varnhold and the defeat of both the Culchek spriggans and Vordakai, the PCs have earned more than the gratitude of an entire village. Before the vanishing, Varnhold had established a sizable territory of its own, including a road

along much of the Kiravoy Bridge and a fair amount of farmland. By rescuing Varnhold and gaining the allegiance of her citizens, the PCs gain not only a new village—they gain control of all of the lands surrounding Varnhold for two hexes in every direction (with the exception of the hex containing area **P**—this area remains under the control of the Nomen centaurs). These 18 hexes can be immediately added to the PCs' kingdom once their own kingdom extends to an adjacent hex, increasing their kingdom's statistics as appropriate for such a sudden expansion. This sudden expansion increases Unrest by 1d6 if the PCs' kingdom fails to make a Stability check, but no further Unrest is generated from the expansion (Varnhold is willing to be annexed and so doesn't come with the usual Unrest cost of annexing a town).

When the PCs create Varnhold's city grid, they can place the following buildings for free: a brewery, an exotic craftsman, a garrison, a granary, an inn, a smith, a tannery, a temple, 3 tradesmen, and 8 houses. All four of Varnhold's borders are land borders, despite the fact that the Kiravoy River flows through town.

APPENDIX ONE: RUMORS

The table on page 52 presents 10 rumors and bits of news, some accurate and some not, that you can use to encourage the PCs to explore an untouched portion of the Nomen Heights. The note "(False)" following a rumor indicates that the rumor is false, a red herring intended to spur further exploration of the Nomen Heights while not actually being legitimate news. Note also that some of the rumors below might become obsolete after the PCs discover the truth behind the

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Nomen Heights Rumors

d10

Roll Rumor

- 1 A silver dragon lives in the Tors of Levenies, but no one's seen her for some time. Perhaps she moved on? (Partially False; the silver dragon is now dead.)
- 2 A giant bird lives in the ruins of an old tower on Talon Peak.
- 3 Lake monsters lurk in Lake Silverstep, they say, but the eels that live there as well make damn fine eating.
- 4 The Nomen centaurs of the Dunsward are violent and territorial—if you're going to visit them, make sure you don't make any sudden moves when one of their war parties approaches you.
- 5 The Nomen centaurs eat humans. I suppose that's not technically cannibalism, but it's still pretty horrible! (False)
- 6 One of my cousin's friends' fathers was an assayer, and he says that there's probably some pretty good grounds for mining south of Lake Silverstep.
- 7 One-eyed giants once ruled this entire area—the strangely regular mounds you see now and then on the Tors are the ruins of their buildings.
- 8 There's a valley to the south that the Nomen centaurs say is an old cyclops graveyard—rumor holds that an army of blood-drinking one-eyed ghosts guards the place! (Partially false; the cemetery contains no ghosts.)
- 9 The Nomen centaurs bury their dead in strange bone yards in the Dunsward; there's probably a lot of treasure buried with them. Too bad the places are swarming with undead centaurs! (False)
- 10 A tribe of spriggans lives in the Tors somewhere. They've been at war with the Nomen centaurs for as long as anyone, I reckon. Rumor holds that the current spriggan chieftain stole a magic bow from the centaurs quite a few years ago, and that's what started the whole fight between them.

rumor—yet it can still be fun for PCs to hear rumors about places they've already explored, simply to enjoy the fact that they know the truth about something not widely known.

APPENDIX TWO: NEW MAGIC ITEMS

Two new magic items await discovery in Vordakai's Tomb.

OCULUS OF ABADDON (MINOR ARTIFACT)

Aura overwhelming conjuration, divination, and necromancy;

CL 20th

Slot eye; **Weight** 1 lb.

DESCRIPTION

An *oculus of Abaddon* is a potent artifact rumored to have been created by one of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse as a way to reward those who work as their agents on the Material Plane. More likely, these items were crafted by a powerful pre-Earthfall race that has long since moved on, leaving behind these dangerous artifacts to tempt mortals into serving the needs of the Horsemen.

An *oculus of Abaddon* appears as a sphere of clear crystal that contains a pinpoint of flickering red light at its center. When held, the oculus feels warm to the touch and fills the holder with a sudden desire to pluck out an eye and place the oculus within the socket—this causes 1d8 points of damage, 1 point of bleed damage, and 2 points of Constitution damage. Once placed in an eye socket, the oculus can only be removed by ripping it free (causing the same amount of damage as the initial plucking). An oculus placed in an empty eye socket immediately heals all damage caused by plucking the previous

eye out. Once placed, an oculus allows its new owner to utilize its powers, as listed below.

- Darkvision to a range of 120 feet (constant)
- *True seeing* once per day as a free action
- *Greater scrying* three times per day
- *Planar binding* once per week (only to summon natives of Abaddon, such as daemons or soul eaters)
- Familiar farsight at will (if the user has a familiar or an animal companion, he may use clairaudience/clairvoyance to observe the world through his familiar, despite any intervening distance as long as he and the familiar are on the same plane)

The *oculus of Abaddon's* greatest power, though, is its haunting beckon. This ability is usable once per year, and allows the user to manipulate the minds of a huge number of targets, provided that the end goal of the manipulation is a tragic or otherwise horrific fate for those being manipulated. This functions as *mass charm monster*, but with a range of 1 mile, and establishes a telepathic link between the caster and all minds in that area. The effects are still language-dependant despite this telepathy—creatures without the ability to understand language (typically, creatures with an Intelligence score of 2 or lower) are unaffected. All other creatures are automatically affected unless they have 6 or more HD, in which case they gain a DC 22 Will save to resist the effects. Spell resistance applies regardless of HD.

The *oculus of Abaddon* is powerfully neutral evil and

The Varnhold Vanishing



possesses a limited and hateful intellect of its own. While not capable of communicating directly with its owner, it refuses to activate its powers for any user who is not neutral evil.

DESTRUCTION

A foul and hideous object, the *oculus of Abaddon* is fortunately relatively easy to destroy, as far as artifacts go. To destroy an *oculus of Abaddon*, it must be smashed by a bludgeoning *holy weapon* wielded by a permanently blinded humanoid—alternatively, any bludgeoning weapon wielded by a permanently blinded good outsider with at least 7 HD will work as well. A DC 30 Knowledge (arcana) check is enough to learn this method of destruction.

SOUL JAR

Aura strong conjuration; **CL** 15th
Slot none; **Price** 5,000 gp; **Weight** 2 lbs.

DESCRIPTION

A *soul jar* appears as a 1-foot-tall glass jar, often with a thick, black, wax plug. While a *soul jar* has no ability to capture souls, it can function as the material component for a *trap the soul* spell (but not as a focus for *soul bind*). If a *soul jar* is used

with *trap the soul* as a trigger object, the spell can be cast on the *soul jar* without inscribing the target's name. This allows the *soul jar* to capture the soul of the next person to touch it, allowing the jar to be used as a devious trap. The creator of the *soul jar* and nonliving creatures can manipulate such a *soul jar* without fear. This variant method does allow the victim a DC 22 Will save to resist the effect.

When a creature is trapped in a *soul jar*, its body and soul appear as a roiling cloud of glowing white smoke that provides dim light in a 20-foot radius. A creature that touches an occupied *soul jar* can communicate telepathically with its occupant. Opening a *soul jar* or smashing it on the ground releases the stored soul and returns it to life—although victims who have spent hundreds of years in a *soul jar* may well have gone mad. In any event, once a *soul jar* is used to capture a soul, it can never again be used for this purpose.

Most *soul jars* are worth 5,000 gp and can thus trap a soul of up to 5 HD. *Soul jars* can be built to capture more powerful souls, at an increase of 1,000 gp per additional HD.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, *trap the soul*; **Cost** 2,500 gp



Iobaria Gazetteer

Anyone who assumes Iobaria is only a barbaric wasteland of frozen forests, broken mountains, and random ruins is a fool. The Ice Steppes, the Caemorin, the Syrzemyan Highlands, and the Hills of Aomen—all are home to mysteries, monsters, myths, and magics long forgotten among the warmer climes. The human realm of Iobaria was perhaps the least of the powers ever to stalk the glaciers' edges, its name the only lingering claim to the land and powers that yet remain there. Look past the freezing mists and trackless wilderness, and you'll find a land whose legends refuse to pass into the haze of history and forgetfulness. This is a place where myth and history blur into a single ageless tradition, weaving a legacy that the diverse native peoples hold as sacred as any religion, and that strangers to these realms ignore at their own peril.

—Gadava Bhulada, *Under the Undying Eye*

Iobaria, to many across Avistan and Garund, exists only as a name for the northern Windswept Wastes and the uninhabited (or at least uncontrolled) lands between their own nations and the eastern powers of Casmaron. In truth, Iobaria is a vast region, unclaimed by any single power for millennia. The rough region has been home to many different factions over the centuries, and even the powerful kingdom of Old Iobaria only conquered roughly two-thirds of this wilderness at its height (though it claimed to outsiders to be master of everything from the glaciers to the Castrovin Sea).

Roughly eight out of 10 of Iobaria's current inhabitants live outside the cities in settlements smaller than most Avistani hamlets (primarily in the forests, around Okor's Basin, or in isolated caves near Mavradia, Lenusya, or Orost). For the human population, this tendency toward isolation may result from a fear of returning plagues, a spirit of independence and self-reliance, a need for anonymity, or a desire to not swear fealty to unworthy city-bound nobles. Other races, such as centaurs, cyclopes, and more savage humanoids, dwell in nomadic tribes with a wide range of campsites and rarely congregate in numbers larger than the average village. In any case, Iobaria on a map seems far more civilized and organized than it is in reality, and those mapped locations may be the most civilized spots therein.

What follows is a brief look into the vast realm of Iobaria. Those who wish to delve into the history of this land in greater detail can find a supplemental timeline of the region available on paizo.com.

REGIONAL GEOGRAPHY

Iobaria's relentlessly cold lands stretch from its northwest corner, between the glacial Icewall and the Lake of Mists and Veils, down to its southeastern corner, bordering the Castrovin Sea. The northern boundaries contain the Ice Steppes, whose rocky conditions fool many into dismissing them as a lifeless barrens leading to the glaciers and the Crown of the World. The most populous area for humans has always been Okor's Basin, the sloping depression between the Lake of Mists and Veils, the Icerime Peaks, and the Syrzemyan Highlands considered by many to be the breadbasket of the north, with its varieties of hardy plant and animal crops. In fact, topographically, Iobaria resembles a crude pyramid, with its peak around Kirya and the lands sloping away from that peak in all directions, save where the Icerime Peaks meet the land.

The Syrzemyan Highlands encompass the majority of central Iobaria and are rife with caverns, hills, and mountains filled with riches and dangers aplenty (be they natural, supernatural, or monstrous in nature). This area contains the fewest human settlements of any size, though the chance of meeting lone prospectors, bounty hunters, or trappers of all races is still moderate. Many of Iobaria's

powerful waterways start from these uplands, with two exceptions: the Myrfrus River (or "Deeprun") in the east and the Okorrus River ("Okor's Flow") in the northwest. Settlers and villages are few and far between, and local populations give their own unique names to the hills and territories of the highlands.

The Caemorin surprises many who come to Iobaria expecting naught but icy rocks and glaciers. These fertile lands are in some places even more productive than Okor's Basin, though the plants and animals are still unfamiliar and unsettling foods to many whose roots stretch westward.

In general, Iobaria's climate is near-arctic and quite hostile, but it supports a surprisingly robust ecosystem that keeps people strong, if isolated and hard. This still isn't enough to make it more than a limited target for those after wealth and resources. Few who don't already love Iobaria's stark harshness ever stick around to see its beauty bloom in summer, and fewer still brave its threats to explore its ancient mysteries and ruins.

HISTORY OF IOBARIA

Little is known, even among the most learned scholars, about the first major powers to claim the northern steppes of Casmaron. Before the Age of Darkness and the formation of the Pit of Gormuz, cyclopes dominated northern and central Casmaron for more than an age. The ancient histories of Ibydos, one of the oldest known human nations of Casmaron, call the cyclopes' empire Koloran, though whether this was the creatures' name for their own land or simply the appellation of their human enemies remains uncertain.

The first human realm to lay claim to what all now consider Iobaria rose from humble beginnings in 752 AR. Twenty Ulfen survivors (out of an initial force of 60) staggered out of the Crown of the World and hunkered down in a small longhouse just as winter closed in. That mere longhouse eventually grew into Okormirr, the first of nine Ulfen cities or settlements of Njalgard, each city a stronghold for one of nine koffars. Njalgard is almost totally forgotten and has since been subsumed by the realm it spawned—Iobaria. The nation was named after Iobar the Potent, the heir to Orlov's throne who cajoled or tricked each koffar into a trial by combat, besting them all to take control of all Njalgard's city-states and unite the lands as one state. After the Choking Plague fractured the populace and induced local rebellions, the three powers within the remaining cities of Kridorn, Orlov, and Mavradia held on to power for a few centuries, but never restored the full glory of Old Iobaria.

Plagues, for one reason or another, seem to crop up more regularly in Iobaria than in other lands. Since the second millennium of the Age of Enthronement, plagues have struck with limited to widespread effects

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no less than 55 times. Despite these eruptions of illness and the mystery of their source, most Iobarians stay due to their love of their land or innate sense that surviving its challenges makes them stronger and more worthy to inherit such a noble land.

Nearly 500 years after the Choking Death fractured the original nation, three warlords, their followers, and their dragon allies restored the rule of New Iobaria. With the inner highlands now easily reached by dragonriders, the three armies quickly conquered the realm anew by 3309 AR. Treachery among the human rulers led to strife and eventually left only one clan in control of Iobaria after 3870 AR (many allies and enemies fled west to what is now Brevoy). The second realm of Iobaria lasted another 8 centuries, until its power dwindled due to infighting and the Drakeplague of 4519 AR. Now, only the covetous factions controlling Kridorn, Mirnbay, and Orlov believe Iobaria still exists in any meaningful way, and their claims to power are only as strong as the mercenary armies they hire.

Iobaria in the present has pockets of civilization all tightly tied to trade, money, and what little control or influence some warlords or former nobles can cobble together through gold or might. Overall, Iobaria has become the wilderness the outside world has long believed it to be, though its people keep their balance and stay alive by knowing what the harsh land and its varied races can do to and for them. Those who respect each other's claims hold détente among themselves and survive; those that ignore the balances of power or reach beyond their grasp find themselves as lifeless as the frozen stone pinnacles of Hvorsuli.

PEOPLE OF IOBARIA

In Iobaria, unlike the lands of the Inner Sea, no single ethnic group or race controls the majority of power. In the eyes of Avistani or Garundi natives, "Iobarian" seems to mean "any human from the northeast who is not obviously Keleshite or Casmari." To natives of this land, the few folk who claim to be "true Iobarians" are those humans and

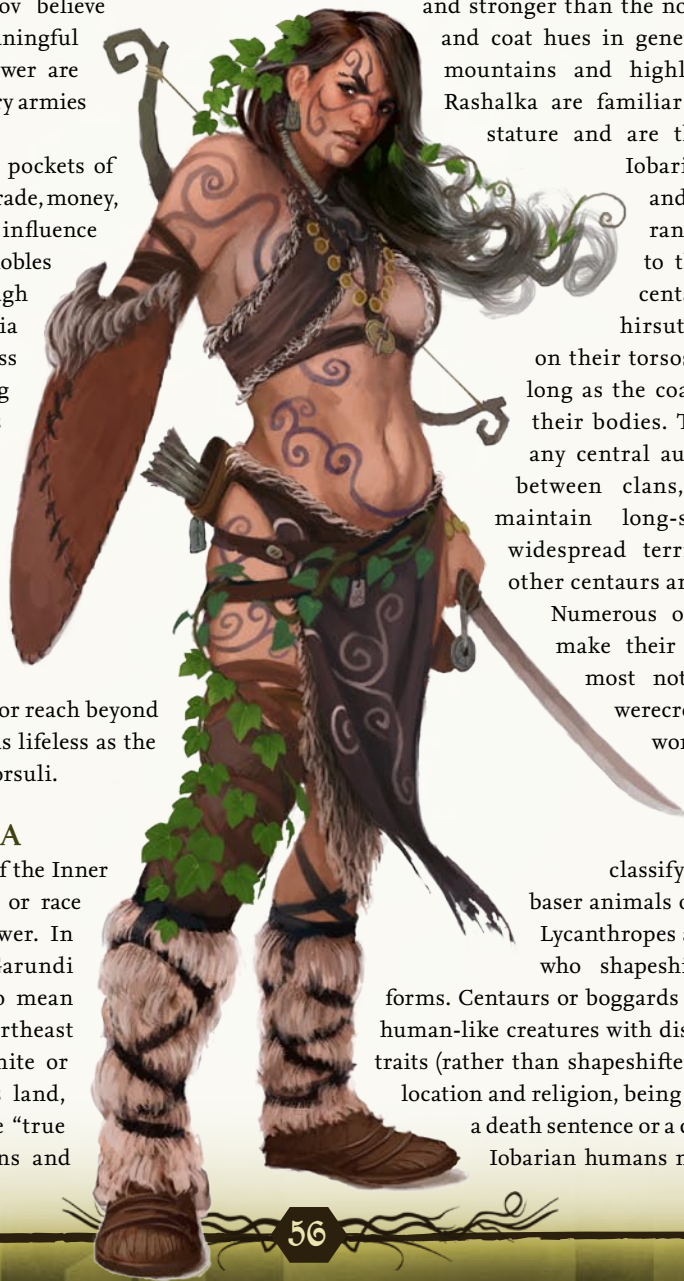
others who yet believe in the leaders that claim the realm still exists. Many simply live here without the benefit of any social denomination or ethnic group beyond their associated family, clan, tribe, or faith. Of the primary sentient races found in Iobaria, the most populous are centaurs, followed by humans, dwarves, and a smattering of other races both civilized and savage. Of the typical monstrous races, ogres, random hill and frost giants, trolls (including at least one enclave of rare rock trolls), and all the various goblinoids are the most common.

While most countries or travelers encounter only one tribe or type of centaur, Iobaria's steppes, hills, and forests are home to members of three recognized groups, similar to human ethnicities: the Azorva, the Rashalka, and the Tsolniva (though others exist east across Casmaron). The Azorva are mountain and highland centaurs, stockier and stronger than the norm, and of darker skin and coat hues in general; they dominate the mountains and highlands of Iobaria. The Rashalka are familiar centaurs in look and stature and are the most numerous of

Iobarian centaurs in the west and all across the south, ranging from Okor's Basin to the Caemorin. Tsolniva centaurs are the most hirsute of centaurs—the hair on their torsos is nearly as thick and long as the coats covering the rest of their bodies. The centaur tribes lack any central authority or government between clans, though elder clans maintain long-standing claims on widespread territories (recognized by other centaurs and most races).

Numerous other bestial races also make their homes across Iobaria, most notably several tribes of werereatures. Two regional words found nowhere else on Golarion, "kodlak" and "kodlok," are used by native humans to

classify beings who become baser animals or assume animal traits. Lycanthropes are kodlak—humanoids who shapeshift to assume animal forms. Centaurs or boggards or harpies are kodlok—human-like creatures with discrete and stable animal traits (rather than shapeshifters). Depending on one's location and religion, being kodlak or kodlok can be a death sentence or a quick way to power. Only Iobarian humans make these distinctions;



kodlak and kodlok races see humanity as just another enemy or rival against whom they fight for the resources of the cold lands.

IOBARIA AT A GLANCE

Iobaria is a collection of sites, geographic features, and mysteries. Many of these locations have both traditional local names (cited first in the following list) and names by which they are known to the land's human population and traders from beyond (noted in quotation marks).

Antoll: The most comfortable city in all of Iobaria, Antoll stays insulated from the worst of the cold by the open and heated waters of the Nyvyrd. Waters piped beneath the city (installed at New Iobaria's height, when it was the capital from 3312 to 3679 AR) keep many homes and businesses warm year-round. This is one of very few cities not founded upon or near the ruins of a cyclops city, and its primary draws today are its pearl and fishing trades and its libraries of magical, religious, herbal, and medicinal lore, founded long before the Pathfinder Society ever breached its walls. A battalion of troops sent from Veka "help keep the peace" (but actually monitor the citizenry to prevent revolts against the koffar Rjul, whose control of trade and military forces around the Nyvyrd make him a de facto despot). There is a growing faction in Antoll opposed to Rjul's excesses, but his spies keep its numbers under control by frequently arresting members and executing them on trumped-up charges.

Ardshrod River: "The Icy Way." This icy river traces the chill northern tundras of Iobaria, separating the semi-settled lands of the south from the more savage north. Few dare travel the river except in the summer months, as it is often choked with iceflows.

Artrosa: "The Three Who Watch." These three massive stone mesas are visible from many Iobarian cliffs despite the distance. Crudely carved into the cliffs are three nude female humanoid figures of uncanny scale, their bodies at least a half-mile long. While their race is unclear, the figures show a long-haired maiden, a pregnant matron, and a hunchbacked crone, each holding up a hand and warning the viewers away (though from what is unclear).

The Caemorin: Both natural resources and dangers hide among the small copses of conifers scattered throughout these scrub grasslands, making travel into the tall seas of grasses worthwhile to those seeking fortune. A variety of animals wander the undulating slopes of the Caemorin; the centaur tribes and other hunters regularly trap them for their tradeable pelts.

Castrovin Sea: The central sea of Casmaron influences the climate of southern Iobaria with its open waters, changing the tundra to semi-arable lands. The waters of the Castrovin are notoriously harsh and unforgiving to

Iobarian Cities & Settlements

Most Iobarian settlements reflect the predominant originating culture that built them, and therefore those founded in earlier periods include structures built in the old Ulfen style. This means most towns and cities have a single longhall or lodge at their hearts, from which the city or clan ruler oversees his duties. Where the cities are built among or adjacent to old cyclopes ruins, there are some minor modifications to the ancient stone, but these areas are often left abandoned due to the difficulty of moving or shaping 5-foot cubes of granite and other hardstones (or due to the habitation of said ruins by dragons or other fell predators over the centuries). Most cities and towns bear partial stone foundations on a more human scale and rely on plentiful wood supplies for most other building materials.

Only Mirnbay, Orlov, and Orost ever made extensive changes to their stone ruins, moving some to create massive defensive walls around their settlements and increase the grandeur of the homes of the powerful. Still, even the largest of the current cities pales in significance compared to the remaining stone arches and towers of cyclopean scale. In fact, as much defense is committed to protecting a city from its adjacent ruins as against enemies from without, as most ruins house the desperate, the monstrous, and the illicit, who are unwelcome in more settled regions. While very few ruins still remain the homes of the dragon allies of Iobaria's noble houses, there are some dragons living in the ruins of Kask-Kirrulthar, Zradnirras, and Kirya (as well as persistent rumors of a mated pair hidden in Orlov, conspiring with Orlov's self-proclaimed "prince" Tzakiv Korya to build his power base anew).

all but the most skilled pilots or craft, limiting much sea traffic to fishing boats huddling in coastal waters rather than providing a means to invade bordering states.

Caverns of Pirthous: A gnarled tangle of tunnels and moderate caves, the Caverns of Pirthous are one of the best-kept secrets on the Syrzemyan Highlands. While many know these are the winter homes of the Azorva and their refuge in times of war, no non-centaur has ever discovered an entrance to the caverns beneath the highland hills without immediately meeting its death. If other centaur clans have similar subterranean or subarctic hideaways, they are even better at keeping those secrets, for these remain unnamed as well as unmarked on any map.

Coreth Wood: This wood is a notorious haunt for ogres and hobgoblins who live in cavern complexes beneath their roots. For humans, Coreth Wood is the sole source of the fine frostfir wood from which artisans

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carve beautiful works of art valued in many affluent Brevic homes.

Daruthrost: "The Loss Bridge." This cyclopean bridge arcs over the Deeprun Crevasse and might have once spanned it entirely. However, its central span and sides fell away long ago, leaving a quarter-mile gap at the bridge's apex. High winds (enhanced by magic) render the gap treacherous at best for flying, and few try after seeing the skeletal remains smashed against the craggy, broken edges of Daruthrost's span.

Dirrinir: "The Deathly Mountain." Many myths and legends surround this tall peak of naked, barren rock, its many craggy steps (carved long before even the cyclopes came to power) leading up its slopes to 20 or more cavern maws. Some claim this mountain spawned the first cyclops, giant, or member of some other race (the specifics depend on whom one asks). Most know that many treasures (and many more deaths) lie within its labyrinthine caverns. The most powerful and famous artifacts ever to come from its halls include the Diadem of Thyrv, the Crown of Mirim, the Perobov Maul, and Kridor's Shininglaive.

Duroth Wood: This gnarled and hardscabble old forest is home to a few gnome settlements, as well as to other civilized races seeking safety and shelter. The wood itself may contain treants or other creatures that torment and torture those beings they deem unwelcome here. As within Fangard, a group of wercreatures defends this forest's borders and interior without explaining themselves or what they guard.

Evaren: This has been the primary trade town between humans and non-humans at the threshold of the Syrzemyan Highlands for long centuries. Evaren is much reduced in population after the last two plagues, though people tired of the isolated life within the forests or out on the tundra often come here to avoid having to pay allegiance to any but the Council of Three who rule the town by means of money, might, and magic. The kind but aged Councilor Pavla Trynar is generally regarded as the most powerful magic-user in all of Iobaria, though her score of apprentices help to keep the peace more than she does directly.

Fangard: The largest single forest in Iobaria, Fangard is home to many factions and forces, only some of whom

are known to the humans of Iobaria. Without using the ancient roads, no human has ever crossed through Fangard alive (though some were allowed to exit from whence they came). Rumors tell of such hidden wonders as an elven court, the homes of Erastil and other gods sacred to trees and nature, and a surviving remnant of the Koloran Empire watching to see how they can best use their ancient powers in a world of mortals-turned-gods. The only truth widely held is the presence of werebeast hunters and rangers (primarily werebears and werepanthers) who patrol the forest borders against intruders and despoilers.

Finadar Forest: What separates this forest from other Iobarian woods is its unique scarlet-needled pines, known as bruorsivi (“bloodpines”) to the local human populace. Bloodpine sap is deep red and is both very flammable and slow burning once dried; the wood itself is a deep burgundy color that brightens after carving and polishing. (The wood’s primary use is as fuel, its slow burning hardwood being an efficient source of heat for many.) Many folk make wind-resistant torches from seedcones soaked in bruorsivi sap atop a twig. While other tree species exist here, the Ulfen explorer Finadar gave his name to the forest by bringing back knowledge of the bruorsivi.

Fralros: “The Charred Watchtower.” This watchtower of the Koloran Empire has seen use in both old and new Iobaria, the massively scaled stone structure having been partially adapted for human use with smaller steps carved up its 100-foot height and smaller ramps and floors built within its massive chambers. Once called Orostros (“Watching Star”), it has been known as Fralros ever since the Great Horde trapped many within and choked them to death by burning fires all around its base for months. Streaks of char still mar the length of the tower, and uneasy ghosts and other threats have occupied the partially ruined tower for a thousand years. If travelers need to pass Fralros, they always do so swiftly and in daylight.

Franax: This pleasant, human-built port once excelled at ship repair and building thanks to its protected bays and its three islands, onto which the port expanded. Now, its buildings lurch in half-repair since the town lost 80% of them to fire in a misguided attempt to eradicate a plague of boils and bone-aches in 4651 AR. Today, the shipbuilding and repair happens in Orlov, and the few who remain in Franax live amid a frenzied struggle for control between Niath Koyra, a fisherman of some repute and coin, and the druids of the Glacircle, who wish to convert all to the worship of an elemental power embedded within the tundra and the Icewall.

Grenalthrost: “The Great Bridge of Grenalf.” This massive stone bridge spans an immense crevasse within the mountains and makes it possible for folks to enter the plateau known as Grenalf. However, even after centuries

of use, the Great Bridge still takes its toll in lives the mechanical traps that defend it spring to life and grind unlucky travelers to paste between its massive stones or fall away on hinges for a time, dropping folk to their deaths.

Hask-Ultharan: “Cairn of Many Torments.” Like Fralros to its south, Hask-Ultharan appears to have once been a massive watchtower for the Koloran Empire. This is a modern guess, as the cairn’s peak rises above Fangard’s trees, and few natives tempt fate enough to approach its dark, rune-covered stones. By accident or design, there have always been giants of some form here, and the longer they remain, the more savage they become toward any they deem to be approaching too close. According to the most recent reports, a mixed group of hill giants and their even more brutish kin has made camp there and begun loud rites with massive bonfires on nights of the new moon. (For more details, see Iobaria’s entry in the *Pathfinder Chronicles Campaign Setting*.)

Hills of Nomen: Named by a fearful Taldan wanderer, the Hills of Nomen contain the primary territories of a large number of centaur tribes, as well as other non-human races. The stretch of Koloran road from Lenusya past Katrivish has long been considered the most dangerous to any who fail to respect other races and their sovereignties. Bones from more than a few armies and their arrogant human commanders litter these hills after vain attempts to “stem the inhuman tides.”

Hoofwood: This coniferous forest is home solely to centaurs and native animals—no other sentients walk or clamber among its trees. As such, it is peaceful save when the northern tribes make war against the local centaur tribes, thundering out of the Ice Steppes to upset the centaur camps in Hoofwood. Throughout the forest lie many pit and spring traps (effective against centaurs, hoarpanthers, and others), which make it dangerous to invade the forest.

Hroran: Once a vibrant logging camp that used the fast waters of the Noyrus to send timber down to the growing Kridorn, Hroran is now a ghost town, its buildings and roads all overgrown by the forest and its animals, which were quick to reclaim it. Few know what happened to Hroran’s people, save that all disappeared without leaving a single body behind during the snow-heavy winter of 4388 AR.

Hvorsuli: “The Snow Spires.” This majestic ruined city (created by unknown powers at a giant scale) of thin spindle-towers and massive gates and walls is a tantalizing mystery for treasure and mystery hunters. Only its foremost gatehouse lies outside the glacier that entombs it, though this allows access inside the frozen city (as do a few broken domes exposed atop the glacier, which allow one to drop into Hvorsuli). A few accounts mention a great power that glows on rare nights deep within the city, held within by the ice and the glacier god Rheth (worshiped by some depraved druid circles).

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Ice Steppes: The harsh tundra that dominates northern Iobaria thunders with the hooves of centaurs, the crack of glaciers, the roars of ice wolves and hoarpanthers, and the skittering of hundreds of creatures unseen in other lands. While dangerous and dire, the Ice Steppes have more life (and death) than most expect of an ice-frosted desert.

Kask-Kirrulthar: A slightly more expanded site than the other two 100-foot-tall watchtowers (Fralros and Hask-Ultharan), Kask-Kirrulthar has an active population of wraith-like beings among its shadowed ruins. While the sun or moon shines, these wispy figures (which faintly resemble anything from children to dragons) remain tied to the stones of this town/watchtower. If any living beings approach within 2 miles when there is no light in the sky beyond starlight, however, these wraiths swarm toward them and flay the warmth and life from their victims' bodies before the light drives them back to their stony prison.

Katrivish: This small town has few inhabitants beyond its mad druids, who all carve out one of their own eyes to honor their cyclops god, Prathos ("the Howling Eye"), and gain gifts of wisdom and knowledge for their sacrifices. Whether mad or not, they have unseen powers that help them find and trap any who dare enter the woods around Katrivish.

Kirosuli: "The Hauntspires." A perfect triple circle of 90 spindle-towers 20 feet in diameter and 60 to 90 feet tall, the Hauntspires' purpose is a mystery since there are no apparent openings into these slim white-stone towers, each of which is topped by a massive crystal cone or pyramid. On nights of the full moon, mournful songs seem to come from the towers, though no figures are ever seen there.

Kirya: This city high above the Syrzemyan Highlands lies nestled among a ring of peaks breachable only by wing or by the Koloran road across Grenalthrost onto the Grenalf Plateau. The Ulfen explorer Grenalf followed the road up into the mountains and survived the bridge's traps to discover a cyclops ruin dominated by temple structures at the edge of a crystal-clear mountain lake (named Orost-Kar, the Lake of Stars). He named the settlement Kirya after his wife, and as the faithful rededicated the temples to their own gods, the area became the focal point for pilgrimages from all across Iobaria. Kirya grew to be one of the larger Iobarian cities, its newer structures built from the wood of Orostgard to the east. However, 7 centuries of logging the Orostgard unleashed something long hidden in the mountains around the plateau, resulting in the deaths of all humans in Kirya by 1574 AR. In the past three millennia, many powers have taken control of the plateau for a time. Cyclopes and hill giants built grisly sites like the Temples of Blood and Bone out of their human victims. Hobgoblins reclaimed the plague-cleared city for a time. Since 3212 AR and the rise of New Iobaria, Kirya has been

under human control, though it currently stands neutral and unaffiliated with any of those claiming control from Kridorn, Mirnbay, or Orlov. Its leader is the great druid Fedor Vasylyk, whose circle embraces 36 local nature gods as children of Erastil.

Kridorn: "Kridor's Cliff." The second great power of Iobaria, Kridorn rises on a sloping cliff at the edge of the Castrovin, its proud towers and lighthouse shining bright for any sailors on the sea. The second most populous city in the region, Kridorn is a city spoiling for a fight with any who point out its shortcomings. Koffar Buran Evyas is the fourth Evyas to hold power here. In his greed, he sees himself as the future overlord of Iobaria, as do his manipulative advisers, all of whom easily outwit Buran. The koffar's constant focus on drumming up his own (and the city's) reputation leaves many municipal decisions and services to others, and thus the large city has unreliable services unless one meets the price demanded. Still, this remains the safest city in southern Iobaria, even with its troubles.

Kridorthrost: "Great Bridge of Kridor." One of the great bridges left from the ages of cyclops dominance, Kridorthrost, which spans the Noyrus, has a small cyclops ruin on its western end, while the human populace has built many wooden and stone structures up along the bridge's length and on its eastern end. This town, controlled by Kridorn and its so-called "noble houses," does not officially limit trade or travel to Mirnbay, but those allied with that rival city suffer more than the usual number of accidents and problems while passing through.

Lenusya: Empty of human inhabitants for more than 100 years since a plague took half its children, Lenusya has become a temporary haven and safehold for many brigands from time to time.

Mavradia: A silent and barren ruin of both cyclops and human construction, Mavradia was once a gem of Iobarian civilization, but the Drakeplague left much of it engulfed in wild magics—great powers of flame, ice, and acid—and over one-third of the city crumbled in less than a day because of battles among dragons seeking a rumored cure within the city's walls. Later attacks by giants and their allies out of the depths of Fangard again made the city a longtime battleground for control. A second plague spelled the end of Mavradia when an unknown disease turned many inhabitants into mindless gelatinous creatures that preyed on all others. Both dragons (undead or otherwise) and the oozing deaths of Mavradia keep this once-great city a dangerous place to visit.

Maw of Karth: This massive fanged maw vaults high over the two small mountains that frame it, creating a carved cyclops' head as the gate. Karth's tongue forms the stairs to it, and his fangs and teeth the siderails leading to an ancient stone roadway. The danger of this gateway is

simple—many brutish monsters and creatures see this as a holy site and worship Karth as a god, making it a choice ambush site for goblins, kobolds, and the like.

Mirnbay: Stone and wood palisades shelter this city, and a peaceful lagoon provides a safe and easy port. Mirnbay is the most vibrant and prosperous of the cities of Iobaria and its most populous. Its most recent influx of Galtan nobles upset the social and mercantile order for a time, though matters now seem resolved (the Galtans presently control more than a third of the trade guilds). The nobles of Mirnbay hold power carefully through alliances and strategies that seem arcane even to those used to labyrinthine politics. House Rhukov (the surviving splinter of royal House Arjal) holds the most power and controls the city through its wizards and their arcane colleges. House Xsagi, a longtime ally growing restless, holds power over the military. Their combined might keeps in check the other 17 noble houses and the five Galtan “newcomer” houses. Still, deals and treaties flow fast and furious as Koffar Ivad Rhukov plans to wrest power from Kridorn and Orlov and rule Iobaria himself, and he promises rewards undreamed to his fellow nobles... though few know if his word can be trusted.

Mishkar: A fully human-built town of wood and stone (not scavenged from cyclops ruins but plowed up from the surrounding hills), Mishkar rests on a hill surrounded by long-built defenses. Unallied with any of the other power factions, Mishkar’s people (a mix of Varisians and Taldans with a random assortment from elsewhere) value their independence and make this city-state relatively self-sustained. Its former purpose as a guard-garrison against threats from the Grenalf Plateau is long in the past. Today, Mishkar is made up of good folk building a strong agricultural and trade base that can help them purchase mercenaries or train soldiers to resist the inevitable armies to come. Alliances with some local centaur tribes have long been discussed, but none have occurred other than those forged of necessity, when resisting goblin hordes out of the upper highlands.

Myrfrus River: “The Deeprun.” The Myrfrus protects the eastern frontier from invasion. It’s unsafe for travel or trade, and not just because of the large carnivorous creatures that swim its waters and lair in riverside caves. The river cascades down innumerable waterfalls and rapids during its course, 50 of which lie between Daruthrost and the Castrovin Sea alone.

Myrnorosc: The sole recognized non-human community in Iobaria, Myrnorosc is a relatively recent town that has risen up around a series of artesian springs. The halflings and dwarves who established the town in 4661 AR allowed a few human families to settle here, but the original population has a secret way to determine rulers—this community holds kodlak and kodlok races in high regard, and in fact reveres them. To be a lycanthrope is a sign of

specialness here (and even the problematic werewolf is welcome if in control of its changes). The komar (“mayor”) of Myrnorosc is the dwarf Harsk Vladaxe, a werebear and head of a dwarven clan with more than a few lycanthropic members. Even their religious members revere Erastil and those subordinate gods with a mix of animal power to them. This is not actively discussed, nor is it hidden; any travelers are treated as kindly as they act themselves. Those who take offense at or hunt lycanthropes should not expect to leave Myrnorosc easily—or alive.

Nirrus River: “The Cliff-flow.” The headwaters of the Nirrus give it its name—springs and a series of small lakes feed into the riverbed from the Icerime Peaks and their foothills, often flowing or falling off cliffs into the five main tributaries that become the Nirrus. More human settlements cluster near this waterway for its fishing (or to pan for precious metals) than elsewhere in Okor’s Basin until one goes north of Storith Wood.

Norinor: Despite its borders on the Hills of Nomen and the upper highlands, the Norinor is actually a relatively sheltered and peaceful forest with more human settlements and “hideholds” within its borders than any other Iobarian forest of note. However, the people living there are hundreds of individuals seeking their own paths and goals, not a singular community. Thus, they do not come together easily to defend each other, save to share information on or warn each other of outsiders in the Norinor (like marauders from Kridorn press-ganging folk into their ranks to increase Koffar Buran Evyas’s power base). In fact, while knowledge of the forest, its resources, and its dangers is common, folks herein often know only their immediate neighbors within a couple of miles and few others, unless their trades involve travel beyond a 5-mile radius.

Noyrus River: “The Runningflow.” The Noyrus provides much fish as well as one of the few avenues into the heart of the Norinor and to its tiny settlements. In fact, the only way most who live in the Norinor reach the outside world is by taking a barge down to Kridorn (or a smaller village before it) to trade their goods for those unavailable among the trees (like steel axes or anvils).

The Nyvyrd: “The Warmth Water.” This massive freshwater lake improbably hugs the Icewall glaciers and remains a steaming warmth unexpected in the north. Its waters teem with fish and sea life of both amazing and monstrous proportions and variety. The only safe waters onto which boats venture lie very close to shore, as sailors fear being capsized by the flippers or jaws of the enormous predators out on the open waters. Nearer to shore are massive beds of shellfish (a major staple) and pearl beds yielding peals of colors and varieties unseen anywhere else (including ice pearls, striped pearls, and some shells nearly as hard as tempered steel). Hundreds

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of small settlements and cabins (and sometimes Taldan-inspired villas or mansions) lie abandoned (or inhabited by brigands or worse) all around the warm shores here, either due to plagues or forced evictions by nobles seeking to control access to the Nyvyrd.

Okor's Basin: This depression slopes from the Syrzemyan Highlands and western Coreth Wood all the way to the Lake of Mists and Veils. Somewhat sheltered from the worst arctic winds, Okor's Basin holds a good stretch of farmland, its inclined fields producing dwarf strains of barley, wheat, rye, and other grains. Domesticated and wild cattle herds roam all across this area, thanks to the scattered settlements of westerners over the centuries.

Okormirr: "The Rest of Okor." All but abandoned save for a small population of druids and their families, Okormirr is nonetheless the most obvious example of an Ulfen settlement, with its log lodges, dragon poles at its wooden

palisades, and the like. This city has seen resettlement many times, and its present residents increasingly grow weary of Prince Tzakiv Korya's empty promises of Orlov's return to greatness. The Druid-King Aalgin expects all who live in Okormirr to swear fealty to his circle and their giant god, Perbov ("the Father of the North"), whose sweat forms the Lake of Mists and Veils.

Okorrus River: "Okor's Flow." While the Okorrus is a relatively small river now, there is some evidence that it was once much deeper and stronger in its flow. Aside from its steep banks and some dry lake beds along its path, the primary bridge across it seems built to span a river of greater height, depth, and width. The Okorrost, or "Bridge of Okor," is one of the first cyclops structures most folks encounter as they travel into Iobaria from the west.

Orlendas: This town has risen from the ashes more than a dozen times, whether destroyed by fire, plague, human war, or centaur marauders. Its importance to Franax and Orlov as the logging source for shipbuilding has waned, but lumber remains one of the town's primary goods, along with small game pelts. Its other recent claim to fame is its komar, Kasrel Unilich, an exiled Galtan noble and ranger whose abilities and coin have made Orlendas far more defensible and prosperous than ever.

Orlov: The oldest "city" of Iobaria and long the capital of that first realm, Orlov is a crumbling ruin in all quarters, whether built by cyclopes or by humans, millennia later. Occupied by fewer than half its former inhabitants, the port city simply ignores or walls off places too ruined to fix or inhabit (and its stonemiths are a far cry from their forebears that carved up the cyclopean stones for their own use). Prince Tzakiv Korya is among the last of his line, descended from one of the factions that restored Iobaria in 3304 AR. He assumes this makes him the legitimate heir to power, though he lacks the money, allies, and will to forge the country anew. For now, he bides his time, luring monied allies from Cheliox or the River Kingdoms to his cause to bolster his plans for reconquering the whole of the region.

Oroskirr: "The Ever-Watching Eye." Also called the Opal Island, Oroskirr is an enduring mystery. Its opalescent dome glows every night and crackles with energy, drawing lightning to it during storms. None have ever broached its shell to tell of the mysteries beneath it, though many assume it is the source of the warming waters of the Nyvyrd in which it rests.

Orosknir: "The Eye Mount" This lone mountain peak stabs higher than its neighbors by a good height, though its name comes from the massive eye carved into its eastern face. This eye never gets covered by the snowpack, and it flashes with energies every few decades, though to what effect none can prove. Many guess this magic may have something to do with the frequent plagues.



Orost: “Star.” The only safe stop on the roads between Orlov and Mirnbay, Orost has become a site of growing importance and strife among the factions fighting to control Iobaria. In the center of town is a massive building of wood and stone that houses the central ruling komar; inside it becomes obvious humans constructed the building over and around an ancient two-ringed stone circle of massive proportions. The town’s name comes from the star mosaics in the floor of this former temple, though its growth and defenses have given it a crude star shape as well. Numerous envoys and proxies of the powerful from Orlov, Mirnbay, Kridorn, and Veka frequent this trade town, and the local law enforcers merely try to protect the citizens from the battles and intrigues among those scrabbling for power among the host of visitors seeking trade goods.

Pharrus River: “The Swiftflow.” The Pharrus yields much wealth in fishing, gems, and metals. There are more edible varieties of fish in this river than any other within Iobaria. It also boasts many sites and shallows wherein folk pan for nuggets of precious metals or random gems (very few brave the dangers of the mountains to mine directly for these resources, preferring to stick to the riverbeds and their many hardscrabble camps).

Sjohvornor: Sjohvor is a great white wyrm who claims the northeastern Ice Steppes and the northern Deeprun Crevasse as his domain. An uncounted number of shattered dragon skeletons litter the cliffs and steppes around his glacial mountain lair, warnings to any foolhardy enough to approach. He is the eldest and strongest dragon to survive the Drakeplague of 4519 AR.

Storith Wood: When the ruins that became Orlov were first discovered, Storith Wood encompassed all of Okor’s Basin, but over the centuries human logging has greatly reduced its size. Korred, satyrs, and fanatical circles of druids now defend its trees from loggers (though they do allow removal of deadfall by local humans, delivering it to the forest edges in exchange for other goods, like cattle or knowledge).

Syrzemyan Highlands: The vast central portion of Iobaria is a land of rough hills, jagged cliffs, and high mountains. Few humans live in this harsh region; the few rugged highlanders who do huddle in well-defended “huntholds” among the far more numerous centaur tribes and rampaging ogre and cyclops bands.

Thraxnorni: “The Bone Caverns.” Unwitting travelers fall prey to the Thraxnorni when they pitch camp at the crossroads at Fangard’s edge. A nearby stone cairn, long hidden beneath thick deadfall and underbrush, marks the entrance to the Bone Caverns. The cairn lies but a short distance from the roads, and the undead and other menaces that exit the caverns at night feast heartily on the unwary. The Bone Caverns get their name from the tales of many tunnels beneath the forests and roads, all lined from floor to ceiling with bones. Whether the tales are

true or not is unknown, as few who get dragged beneath the cairn (or other hidden sinkholes) return to report.

Veka: The easternmost hold for Iobaria in the Ice Steppes, Veka has stood as a garrisoned fort town since its founding. This is the power base for Koffar Rjul, a shrewd and ruthless man whose family’s control of Veka’s smithies (where all metal weapons and materials in the area are forged) led to his control of the local military, making him the most powerful man around the Nyvyrd. He hopes to increase his control over Antoll and ally with Prince Tzakiv Korya of Orlov—or if the latter fails, isolate the Nyvyrd from the prince and preserve his own power.

Vladmirr: Only its relative isolation and proximity to the Icerime Peaks have kept Vladmirr from becoming a major city and a player in Iobarian politics. The Pharrus River’s delta, which surrounds it on all sides, provides many arable patches for crops, and the river also yields large amounts of precious metals panned in many places along its length. Still, the lack of a protected port and the high waves of the Castrovin Sea make Vladmirr only a temporary stop for loading or unloading goods in good weather before most make sail for Kridorn to the north. Consequently, the town’s population hasn’t managed to grow much over the years, and in the end Vladmirr has ended up as more of a support operation for Kridorn (providing grains, cattle, and gold) than the hub of power it has long hoped to become.

Volod: One of the newer settlements in Iobaria, Volod came into being in 4400 AR to replace the lost logging camps of Hroran. This town has been tied to the logging and wood trades for much of its history, and these professions still dominate Volod’s mercantile aspects. Despite its traditional past, Volod has become a strange place of late, with druids talking of new gods walking the highlands and the Norinor, demanding worship.

Vurnirn: “The Centaur’s Cliff.” The sole cyclops ruin in Hoofwood and the largest single centaur settlement in Iobaria, Vurnirn plays host to many conclaves of clan leaders every summer. It is the shared seat of power for the Rashalka clans Kraask, Tsurvom, and Voaldyn, with the city split among them into three zones of control. These three clans (and Clan Phelor, which dwells in the southern forest) all share the Hoofwood as territory and maintain a provisional alliance against the more ruthless Tsolniva centaurs to their north. Vurnirn also marks the northernmost reach of Rashalka centaurs in Iobaria.

Zradnirras: Once a powerful city for cyclopes and then later for Iobarians, Zradnirras is now a deadly shambles of stone, magic, and danger. At least one family clutch of dragons lives in the toppled tower ruins, watching the city and the crevasse to the east for prey. Still, tales of the Zradnirri Arcolleges and their fabled magics draw many to its dangers (and its dragon-worshipping goblin and kobold legions).



Into the Stolen Lands

“Some rats and wolves walk on two legs and seem as human as the rest of us—at least until someone gets in their way. They are the dregs of Golarion: the outlaws, bandits, and fugitive murderers who are welcome nowhere. Nowhere, that is, but the dismal swamps and dark forests of the Sellen watershed—the so-called River Kingdoms.

“A clutch of robbers’ lairs scattered in a marsh, they are, more than true realms with laws. Cross any local lord, and he’ll slaughter you without hesitation—and where the points of his bully-knights’ blades end, wilderlands where the desperate and the outcast lurk begin. A good place to stay away from, unless you seek marauders for some purpose... or some fugitive you’d like to serve a little revenge. Chances are good that any missing blackheart’s hiding in the River Kingdoms. The trick will be finding him before you get killed.

“You’ll be searching alone, mind. I seek fugitives across many lands, but I don’t do the River Kingdoms. Otherwise, I’d have long ago become no more than a fading memory—another in the long, long body count.”

—Ambras Baerinth, Seeker-For-Hire

The River Kingdoms are a collection of small, ever-changing realms, each surviving by the might and cunning of its rulers. Most Riverfolk are the outcast dregs of other lands. Both monsters and men no monster dares trust abound in this overgrown, heavily forested country. The traveling merchant Athlan Daermund (now deceased) once accurately described the region as “countless wooded hills and tiny farms rising amid far too many unmapped, treacherous bogs and marshes.”

The River Kingdoms are named for the Sellen River, whose many arms and tributaries run through their heart. That long, famous, and navigable water cleaves other lands, but the River Kingdoms make up the wettest part of its run; countless springs rise in pond-filled, stream-laced forests and run down into bogs and marshes that in turn drain into the mighty Sellen.

Many unmarked lanes and trails meander through the area. Travelers on these brigand-infested routes frequently encounter fords, rickety bridges, or washouts; good roads are few. Ambushes can occur anywhere except inside an inn (by local custom, inns are usually “safe ground” where all may meet and trade).

Any ruins that might be encountered when passing through the region are likely inhabited—often by monsters—and the small, shattered, old keeps of fallen lords are everywhere. Despite their perils, some ruins are favorite travelers’ camping places, as they are more easily defended than thickets or marsh hillocks. Fords are particularly dangerous places, whereas the only folk likely to rob a traveler at a ferry are the ferry operators.

Riverfolk generally go about armed, even if only with a dagger and an old sock full of stones, and an apparently unarmed person should instantly arouse suspicion. In the River Kingdoms, showing weapons and unhesitating eagerness to use them is the best way to avoid trouble.

Nowhere are all of these things more true than in the region known as the Stolen Lands, a backwater even to those rustic provinces that call themselves kingdoms. Contested by many but claimed by none, the Stolen Lands are mostly wilderness, though of late certain forces both within the River Kingdoms and without have begun to make yet another play for control of the area. What follow are several notable locations within the Stolen Lands, though the largely unmapped and frequently changing nature of the River Kingdoms makes it easy to drop the following adventure sites into any campaign.

DROWNED TREES

The bandit hideout known as Drowned Trees resembles many other bogs in the Stolen Lands: a little valley in the heart of a forest that’s filled with black, stagnant water. Just as many trees stand in the water as grow around it, but the gnarled, many-branched old forest giants rising out of the

water are “standing dead”—drowned by flooding. Brooks flow into the water-filled hollow, and a larger stream flows out of it that continues on until it joins other waters and eventually the Sellen itself.

The upper branches of the bog’s dead trees are joined by rope bridges, each made of three lines: a thick “floor” cable and two smaller ropes that serve as handrails. The bandits who dwell here have braided and tied vines, mosses, and various still-living water-shrubs to the bridges to try to conceal the ropes and anyone using them. Drowned Trees is many years old, so by now most of the bridges really do look like thick, growing masses of living vegetation, not man-made catwalks.

Mosses dangle from the bridges, and many vines trail down into the water from them. Some of the vines are tied to loop-cables: waiting underwater snares intended to entangle large fish and edible marsh creatures, and to hamper attackers. Other vines wind around sunken chests of coins and gems, booty hidden from successful thefts and raids (most such chests are attached to several vines, not just one).

Drowned Trees is used to hide treasure, wine, and food of slow-perishing sorts, such as nuts, wax-sealed wheels of cheese, and smoked meats stored in stout metal “strongchests.” It’s also a place where bandits harried by adventurers or knights of an angered local lord can retreat. It’s unlikely to be found by accident or inhabited by one group of bandits for long—except by Dargut Droon.

DARGUT DROON

Dargut Droon is a scrawny, long-armed human bandit who, years ago, got caught in the backlash of two clashing spells. These magics transformed him into a misshapen, bulbous horror whose mottled brown-green, mound-covered skin is studded with little fish-like flapping fins. His fingers have lengthened into cutting, gouging talons. He can breathe underwater just as well as on land and will drag down and drown any who displease him, if he can catch them alone and within reach.

Dargut is feared but also revered by most Drowned Trees bandits for a peculiar property of his slimy touch: he can temporarily melt human flesh, tissue, and organs. This allows him to murder with ease by literally burning holes in his victims or by plunging a hand into a person’s chest to crush the heart or any other organ, but it also enables him to heal cuts and stanch blood loss by liquefying and melding severed edges back together.

Dargut is quite willing to heal those who befriend him, defend him, act as his agents (for he never leaves the bog), and bring him back treasure. “Treasure” to Dargut means magic items; he clings to the slim hope of finding something that can make him normal again. He’ll also accept edged and pointed weapons he can use to improve his underwater

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lair, a fortress of deadly points in the deepest part of the bog, which he flees into when faced with real trouble. In it, he can swiftly stir up mud to blind attackers, at which point he has the disconcerted invaders at his mercy.

THE DROWNED TREES BANDITS

At any one time, 40 to 60 bandits use Drowned Trees as a base; one-third are newly joined “fish” (expendable fighting-muscle trusted not in the slightest by veteran bandits). The remainder is made up of veterans, hardened rogues and fighters of all sorts. The bandits skulk through the forest around Drowned Trees robbing travelers, though they launch bolder raids that range farther and even target towns or cities whenever takings become scarce.

Drowned Trees has had a series of leaders, capable battlefield commanders who last until they fall in battle or until one of their fellows decides to murder them and take their place. There’s never a shortage of ambitious bandits who think they can do better than the current leader, but it’s rare for more than three or four to enjoy the support of anyone but themselves and whoever they can easily bully.

The Drowned Trees bandits are a sly force of trap-setters and ambushers, but they have very little real discipline. They’ll enthusiastically play parts in any scheme that allows them to harass a foe from concealment, but they avoid any face-to-face battle that isn’t a surprise attack with a clear and immediate escape route, and they will often disobey orders that require them to defend anywhere that isn’t Drowned Trees or to take on any armed, ready force in a fair fight. In the forest, the bandits’ favorite attacks include logs suspended on ropes above trails that are swung down to ram unsuspecting targets and crossbows fired from high tree boughs; they also like to attack from the far side of a monster lair, so that any counter-charge from the target lands the foe in the waiting jaws of the monster.

The current bandit leader is Althor Haugrim, a strong, broad-shouldered brute of a warrior, ever suspicious of treachery, although he absolutely trusts the three loyal cronies who have risen with him. One of these three, Omnur Lartash, is waiting in the wings should Haugrim misstep (although Lartash is keeping quiet about his ambitions for now). Unlike Haugrim, Lartash wants the bandits to infiltrate nearby towns, inns, and the occasional passing band of traders to gain ready access to necessities and a steady flow of information—the better to take on the best targets when they choose, not just when nearby pickings get slim.

LOSTLARN KEEP

This monster lair is a long-abandoned, crumbling stone keep in the forest. It’s what many Riverfolk and visitors think of when they picture the wild forests of the River Kingdoms, because there are literally scores of similar small, ruined, and overgrown fortresses hidden in the forests.

Lostlarn is a single crenellated tower with no surrounding wall, wings, or outbuildings. The tower stands upon a small hill amid the trees and is broken open, its four interior floors and the stairs that connect them visible through a great gap that stretches from the top of the tower most of the way to the bottom. Mature trees grow up and out through this rift, and vines and shrubs have spread in such dark, tangled profusion around the tower that the tumbled stones of the tower wall are almost entirely hidden. The many clefts among the stones have made the vicinity a favorite lair of snakes; all types and sizes of them can be found in profusion in the thriving forest immediately around Lostlarn.

No humans dwell in Lostlarn, nor do they tarry for long when they come visiting. Though it’s not far from a road, few camp near it twice. Riverfolk say that those who go to Lostlarn often go missing—forever.

OLD TALES

There are many tales of Lostlarn, but three yarns of its past persist around River Kingdoms campfires and tavern tables. One claims it was the tower of a powerful wizard who died in a spell-battle that split open his keep from top to bottom with “flensing fire,” and who may still haunt the area, guarding his yet-hidden magic and hunting for the foe who killed him. Another story insists that the thieves who slew Lostlarn Keep’s owners later stored dragon eggs there, and that a hatchling dragon forcing its way to freedom shattered the tower. A third popular tale says Lostlarn was the stronghold of a robber lord who died horribly, along with all of his men, when some booty they seized turned out to be guarded by a crawling, flesh-eating growth that killed them and turned them into mindless, shambling plant-beasts.

It’s generally agreed that, whatever its past, Lostlarn has been an abandoned ruin for around 60 years and was built at least 30 years before that (probably much earlier). The oldest written records in Daggermark call it “Larrhoztarm’s Keep,” so it seems Lostlarn is a corruption of that name, presumably that of its builder or most prominent early occupant.

Recent rumors claim Lostlarn is home to a “wall of eyes” and that any who step through it arrive at a strange and wondrous otherworld, where gems litter the ground, free for the taking.

DWELLERS IN THE KEEP

In truth, Lostlarn is home to a family of mimics, one giant and five or more smaller ones who cooperate rather than fight among themselves. The giant mimic usually flattens itself along an interior keep wall and takes on the wall’s likeness (only with many mysterious niches, to encourage intruders to reach into it), but its smaller kin pose as just about anything, from treasure chests to doors, tables, and even wagons.

If one mimic is slain, the remainder typically seek to avoid battle, hiding by taking the shape of stone blocks, not exuding any sticky slime, and not attacking creatures that contact them (this timidity generally lasts for about a day, though the mimics always defend themselves once wounded).

A ghost also lurks in Lostlarn. It's all that's left of Cabrant Larrhoztarm, who died when a hired wizard's spell cast on Cabrant's sword went wrong, causing an explosion that killed Cabrant, the wizard, and all but one of Cabrant's family (his son Resker, who was then absent from Lostlarn)—not to mention splitting the tower wall wide open.

Cabrant's ghost has the power of telekinesis and endlessly tries to warn his son not to use the sword that the same unfortunate wizard had enchanted for him years earlier, because it too may explode (in fact it did so long ago, killing Cabrant's son). If encountered, the ghost chooses a particular PC to cling to and accompanies her across Golarion, endlessly searching for Resker and frequently being overcome with rage and revealing itself by bursting out of the PC and attacking all living creatures nearby other than the PC's companions.

Initially, the ghost tries to hide, accompanying its chosen PC silently and invisibly, but over time it grows increasingly bold and starts to communicate with the PC and any companions by gesture, writing, and action; it can understand speech but is itself eerily silent.

Cabrant Larrhoztarm was short-tempered, sarcastic, and snobbish in life; his ghost, too, is easily exasperated and baleful. It is familiar with the region as it was 2 centuries ago (changes bewilder and infuriate it), and attempts to look in now-hidden, possibly treasure-filled places for Resker Larrhoztarm, mentally tugging at its chosen PC when she's awake and filling her dreams with vivid and lying visions when she's asleep in order to persuade the PC to visit the places where it wants to seek Resker.

THE TREASURE OF LOSTLARN

Larrhoztarm's wealth was all either destroyed in the magical blast or looted and carried away since, but the keep nonetheless contains many small, hidden treasures, all stolen goods cached by various visitors who explored the keep or used it as a base before the mimics arrived.

BLACKSTONES FORD

The tributaries that feed the Sellen are often broad, shallow waterways that fill flat ground between the countless small hills of the River Kingdoms. Bridges are many in the region, but fords—where roads meet streams and rivers in “wet crossings”—are far more numerous. Blackstones Ford is named for the many visible black stones in its water; large stones and boulders are rare at fords, but this crossing is otherwise typical: a particularly shallow part of the riverbed links two halves of a dirt wagon-road, with a

guideline of stout rope to mark the best path through the river. (Some fords lack a rope, and trees are instead felled on both banks to point along the line of the route to take for the easiest crossing.)

Important fords like Blackstones that are strategically located on trade roads or have good camping or established market areas inevitably accumulate discarded refuse (broken wagon wheels, barrels, boards from old crates, and the like) and are accompanied by some form of shelter, usually simple sheds or shanties. Blackstones has both: a lot of trash, mainly odd wood scraps too rotten to be useful as firewood, and half a dozen scattered sheds, all dirt-floored wooden structures now in great disrepair. Erected by traders who soon discovered that such a fixed, public location made them easy targets for any troublemaker—human or monstrous—who happened along, the sheds were soon abandoned and are now used by travelers as overnight shelter.

For about a decade, a succession of “masters of the ford” tried to charge tolls to all using the crossing, but they had to be well-armed, formidable thugs to even contemplate this livelihood—and all soon encountered travelers who found it far cheaper to butcher any master and his men than to pay a toll.

In recent years, knife-sharpeners, ironmongers, and wheelwrights have set up temporary shop at Blackstones, staying a few days and then moving on to other fords. Such trade has faded since various monsters began to prey on passing travelers at Blackstones. Most such beasts were soon slain, but Blackstones Ford has now begun to attract a reputation for unknown, formidable, persistent danger; it's considered a place not to tarry or camp near by night, lest travelers just disappear.

THE DISAPPEARERS

Blackstones Ford is now home to a band of cautious and cunning monsters who work together to lightly harvest vulnerable travelers—those too few to defend themselves or raise an alarm, or who can be lured away from their party—while avoiding pitched battles against strong, ready foes.

This “adventuring band” of eight monsters hails from a distant underground area where they were summoned and then changed by many spells cast on them by mad drow wizards, who kept them caged as experimental subjects. They lost any fear of daylight, gained short-range telepathy with their fellow captives, and became able to speak and understand a smattering of Elven and Undercommon.

The Disappearers are led by Iluith, a dark naga of malicious schemes and coldly clear-headed patience and foresight, who calculates consequences and risks, and clings to his “considered outcomes.” He never acts out of anger or to obtain revenge, only to exact whatever take in victims and booty can be managed with minimal risk

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of loss to the band (or chance of triggering a successful hunt for retaliation). Iluith personally considers most of his fellows expendable, but he is very careful to keep this opinion utterly secret from other band members.

Iluith most values Dreeth, a cloaker that spends most of its time flattened on the ramshackle roof of the largest Blackstones shed, posing as part of that roof. Dreeth is the aerial spy and “pouncer” of the band. Though Dreeth’s demeanor can best be described as permanently peevish and pessimistic, the drow spells quelled its paranoia and made it willing to work as part of a team, even eager to trust and bestow loyalty on Iluith.

Kaladryn is the band member considered next most useful by Iluith, largely because of his nigh-fanatical loyalty to the dark naga (his only friend during their long mutual captivity). Originally a svirfneblin, Kaladryn was transformed by the drow spells and fused with mindless, subterranean snake bodies into the likeness of a marilith. Kaladryn capably wields an array of deadly weapons acquired from victims of the Disappearers and is fully proficient in

uses of his marilith body (constriction, tail slap, and slams), but he lacks all demonic abilities and spell-like powers. Iluith usually induces Kaladryn to pose as the leader of the Disappearers in all combats, while he himself remains as hidden as possible and uses magic from afar.

The least useful Disappearer is Oront, a cyclops employed in battle or to overthrow and immobilize wagons and carts during attacks. Oront is far less brutish and stupid than he seems; he has a cruel sense of humor and a long, keen memory for smells, names, and faces.

The other four group members are its busy, oft-deployed “swarmers” and spies: a pair of chokers and a mated pair of tengus (Arainth and Rareezra). The tengus resent Iluith’s controlling influence and often play pranks, but they are so ruled by their pride that Iluith can easily sway them with flattery and rewards.

A wounded or weary party of adventurers is a favorite target of Iluith, who generally seeks to “vanish” party members in such a way as to make their companions think other nearby beings are responsible.

ORTHULT

This lizardfolk village is physically typical of such communities found in the largest, deepest marshes of the River Kingdoms. It's a cluster of mud-and-stick huts that look like mounds of living swamp vegetation (because that's what grows all over them), on islands in open water at the heart of a marsh. These solid islands are surrounded by moving "islands" of floating weed that the lizardfolk shift about constantly to conceal their homes, making it difficult for intruders to map the marsh or easily venture near its heart.

THE ORTH MERCANTILE SECRET

Orthult differs from other lizardfolk settlements in the willingness of its inhabitants (known as the Orth) to trade with mammals and allow such dangerous creatures near their homes. Orthult makes a tidy income by quietly offering food and hidden refuge to Riverfolk on the run from pursuers, and by storing stolen or avidly sought items or valuables for a wide range of clients. In exchange, they accept goods that can be bartered with Riverfolk, including coins, gems, and weapons—including battle magic of various sorts and "firepot bombs"—that can be used against future attackers.

There is a "real" Orthult where the lizardfolk actually live. Here, they tend their fish, captive insects and worms, succulent broadleaf weeds, and other lizardfolk fare, away from visitors who could readily endanger this food supply. Several islands away, yet still in the heart of the marsh, is the "show" Orthult, where paying guests can find accommodations and goods are hidden away.

The "show" village is staffed by shifts of armed, alert Orth guards, plus a few younglings and elders to aid in the ruse, all of whom keep close watch over the guests and goods. Other lizardfolk constantly patrol the marsh's fringes, observing all who approach and watching for any attempts to poison or harmfully enchant the marsh.

A DEEPER ORTH SECRET

On the marsh shores are concealed burrows that tunnel into small earthen caves, each of which contains a cage used to imprison monsters. The Orth are well aware of the ways and powers of their captive beasts and have bargained with traders over the years to obtain the beasts and the cages. The lizardfolk see to the needs of their imprisoned monsters regularly, and often inspect the cages and fastenings to ensure none of their captives get free.

When unwanted intruders must be dealt with, Orth border patrols on the marsh's outskirts release specific monsters to maraud as they will within a given area, hopefully attacking or distracting the intruders.

The current menagerie includes a rust monster in a stout wooden cage, as well as a dire wolverine, a monitor

lizard, an owlbear, an ettin, a dire bear, and a swamp boa (a Huge constrictor snake), each housed in a massive steel cage. Four more such cages are empty. The Orth are eager to acquire four additional monsters that can't fly and either can't swim or prefer to avoid water (so they will stay in their appointed areas rather than escaping into the marsh's depths).

THE DEEPEST ORTH SECRET

Orthult's most secret weapon is **Norauth the Withered** (LN male human wizard 6), a human wizard of great age and infirmity who dwells on a tiny isle between the real Orthult and the "show" village, waited on day and night by attentive lizardfolk. Norauth fell victim to a curse cast on him by a rival that he has thus far been unable to remove, halt, or reverse; it very slowly withers away his body from the toes upward.

These days Norauth can no longer walk—his legs are mere rubbery, useless remnants and his spine is so weak that he can't sit up unaided. He lives in a cradle-chair the Orth built, which they lay down when he wants to sleep and place upright on various surfaces when he wants to eat, work at a table, or "stand" in his spellcasting place. This area is a large, flat space surrounded by a horseshoe-shaped earth berm; it has a small roofed alcove at one end where the Orth constantly guard Norauth's spellbooks and components needed for spells and magical experiments but is otherwise open to the sky.

Norauth is driven by the desire to defeat the curse that is gradually killing him, or even simply to slow its progress. In the meantime, all of his wants are seen to by the Orth, in exchange for which he has agreed to defend the marsh with his spells against any determined assault or magical intrusion. He has three magic items: a hand-sized "lantern" stone that can glow with light when he touches it (he can alter its brightness or cause it to go dark by silent will, if he's close enough to see it) and two *potions of cure serious wounds* he's been saving until dire need (such as being wounded in battle).

Without lizardfolk aid, Norauth can only crawl, but his gaunt arms are very strong and his will even stronger; he can drag his emaciated, very light body upright by clutching onto supports, and he can readily cast spells that don't require moving about. A diligent guardian who's very grateful to the Orth, he always has formidable offensive and defensive magic ready. He spends a lot of time magically experimenting to try to break the curse, and such spellcastings rising from the heart of the marsh may well attract PC attention.

Norauth happily takes commands from the current Orth chieftain (Kurguluk, a large, prudent male) or any Orth elder from the Council of Sixteen, which relies on the chieftain—whom the council can dismiss—to enact its decisions.

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TREE OF STARS

Even the deepest, densest stretches of the forests that cloak much of the Stolen Lands have their clearings. Most are wild, overgrown gaps in the canopy caused by the fall of an ancient, massive tree, or by the burn scars of lightning fires, and soon disappear as saplings reaching vigorously for the rare sunlight fill them in. Yet a few clearings—the glades tended by druids—are more tranquil, beautiful, and strangely tidy. They remain wild, despite being tended.

One such clearing is the legendary Tree of Stars, so named because, as Riverfolk tavern tales insist, on most nights an eerie floating light hangs in the air, upright like a tree, right in the center of the glade.

Most Riverfolk disagree over just where the Tree of Stars is, but all agree it's found only with much difficulty, in the deep forest at the heart of a thick and interwoven stand of soaring, mature trees in leafy good health. The glade is round and floored with lush green moss.

The light at the glade's center is an irregular, vertical oval of radiance, blue-white and faint, always scintillating brightly with many tiny, white, winking sparks or "stars" that float within the coruscation—points of light that continually flare into being, mill about, and fade away again. This so-called tree often fades away entirely but never touches the ground or moves from where it hangs above the center of the glade.

THE LEGENDS

Some Riverfolk say the Tree of Stars is a magical doorway to other worlds through which strange and fearsome creatures come—and the most desperate of hunted fugitives flee from Golarion forever. Others claim it is where druids go to die, embracing the Tree of Stars and transforming themselves into young, vigorous woodland beasts that retain the memories and magical powers of their former lives. Still others say the tree purges any poison, disease, curse, or taint in any item or being that comes into contact with it. Magic items are recharged by the Tree of Stars, some wizards say—even items that can't normally be recharged. Yet another legend says that unicorns originally sprang from the tree, and that a dying elf who touches the tree can be reborn as a unicorn.

Riverfolk lore insists that demons and devils have both been burned away to nothing, screaming horribly after being hurled into contact with the tree by foes they were fighting. One tale states that ages ago an enchanted gem-crown was thrown into the tree by a dying elf lord, whereupon the crown disappeared. Another account claims the crown was merely rendered invisible and left floating for the right elf to come along and claim it. Some seers say a god is fated to be born out of the tree—after one of the gods revered now is spectacularly destroyed.

THE TRUTH

Any or all of the legends about the Tree of Stars may be true or partially true, but few are believed by the Guardians of the Glade, those mysterious beings sworn to protect the glade and the Tree of Stars. The term "guardians" is actually a misnomer, invented by Riverfolk talking in taverns, and is not favored by the guardians themselves. The guardians don't actually prevent any creature from entering the glade but instead act mainly to quench or prevent fires there—though they do attack and seek to drive away creatures who try to use magic on the Tree of Stars or destroy glade flora. Still, the name persists.

These Guardians of the Glade are in truth certain senior druids of the Green Faith who tend and watch over the glade, watering its mosses, clearing away fallen leaves and branches and all corrupting fungi, and using spells to prevent burrowing and digging forest creatures from despoiling the glade. These druids do not speak of the nature or powers of the Tree of Stars to those not of their faith. They entertain varying personal speculations about the nature of the light, but they agree that it was Gozreh's will that long ago caused this "manifestation of natural forces" for reasons and purposes as yet unknown to mortals.

Over the years, the druids have learned much about the Tree of Stars' powers through experimentation and observation of other beings interacting with the tree. The radiance seemingly cannot be destroyed by any magical or physical attack, though it "drinks" storm lightning, keeping it away from the rest of the glade and its surroundings, and seems to gain strength from it. On the other hand, certain spells almost always make it fade away entirely for an indefinite time.

Physical contact with the tree is like touching rushing, coiling energy; it makes hair stand on end, flesh tingle, skin glow briefly, and eyes momentarily blaze. It also changes all creatures who come into contact with it in some minor way, usually healing them of any current wounds and causing them to vividly remember random, long-buried, and hazy memories. This seems to happen every time a particular creature visits and touches the tree, though no more than once a day. Other alterations wrought by the tree are rarer and more random. It may augment a character ability or even bestow a minor spell-like power, either permanently or for a long period of time.

The tree also always seems to instill a mission or compulsion in creatures it affects, which may not manifest until years later—such compulsions include strong urges to rescue or slay a particular being, or to find and seize an item upon seeing it for the first time. Whatever purpose these mysterious missions may have remains unknown, and the Guardians of the Glade claim to have no knowledge of these quests.

GROMMOR'S MAW

Somewhere in the deep forests of the Stolen Lands is a menacing, yawning cave mouth infamous in local lore as an entrance to the Darklands. Yet these are little more than rumors, for the forests of the Sellen watershed contain hundreds of such caves, and locals frequently claim these caverns lead to the lightless depths and fearsome monsters of the Darklands. Yet popular belief persists among Riverfolk that Grommor's Maw is the real thing, a connection of the surface lands of Golarion with the Darklands below.

No one remembers who Grommor was. A gruff, outcast adventurer-dwarf, some say. A human prospector who found gems as large as human heads when delving down into the Maw, others claim. Still others say Grommor was a dragon that used to open its jaws wide enough to fill the cave mouth and swallow up all who dared venture inside.

Whatever the truth is behind the origin of the name, Grommor's Maw today is a large but well-hidden cavern entrance that leads from an overgrown forest ravine into a vast network of natural caverns, a string of irregular rooms carved out of solid rock by long-vanished waters, which descend to unknown depths that probably, by long and torturous ways, connect to the Darklands.

Yet nothing fares down into that fabled underworld or comes up from it—at least not to anyone's knowledge. Instead, a bold band of harpies lair in the outermost cavern of the Maw, knowing they can retreat from any intruder into deeper caverns where few will dare to follow, because of the odd inhabitants of those caverns—the Marching Men.

THE MARCHING MEN

Three caverns deep beyond the Maw are filled with golems, constructed by unknown hands to fulfill still-mysterious missions; the outermost two caverns each contain a dozen stone golems, and the innermost cavern holds nine iron golems.

The golems attack any living creature that enters their caves; given the golems' numbers and the close confines of the caverns, only flying creatures have much hope of eluding them. They seem to be under instructions not to allow anyone past them into the even deeper caverns beyond, and they use their bodies as walls to block the openings between caverns to accomplish this, if need be.

Those deeper caverns have a handful of veins of gemore running through their walls and ceilings, but none seem to hold any ready treasure or other items of interest, though a drinkable flow of water does seep from the ceiling of one cavern to run into the next cavern and sink through its floor.

From time to time, one of the golems will vanish or reappear in a flash of light. This is by means of a *teleport*

spell, which safely carries along any living creature that manages to touch the golem. This spell whisks the golem to an apparently random location, usually in the River Kingdoms, where it tries to slay either the nearest creature or the creature closest to a specific spot (such as a doorway, a bridge, or a particular room in a castle). Some of these locales were constructed much more recently than the time of the first appearances of these golems; all that can be said about the spots where the golems appear is that, more often than not, they seem to be associated with large constructions, such as city walls, fortresses, bridges, and piers.

If a golem is destroyed in one of its ventures, it does not return to the caverns of the Maw, but if it survives, successful or not, it soon teleports back (when that seems to vary without apparent reason; it's not always promptly after a successful slaying or after a target gets away). Golems sent on these mysterious missions unhesitatingly pursue their chosen targets out of the area of their arrival, if need be, and defend themselves against all who attack them.

Who made these golems and placed them in the caverns, why they carry out these attacks, what the golems' connection to Grommor's Maw is, and where the "Marching Men" name came from are all mysteries, though even very old Riverfolk writings refer to these murderous golems by that term.

THE DANCING DRYADS

On rare occasions, another strange sight occurs in the ravine right in front of the Maw: brightly glowing, green-white radiances appear, outlining dryads who step out of the surrounding trees—even dead trees, tiny saplings, and shrubs that are never home to such tree-fey—and dance wildly together in front of the Maw. The dryads are silent, moving with manic speed and agility, and seem aware only of each other and not any nearby creatures, regardless of what actions the observers may take. After a brief dance, the dryads run toward the Maw, fading away just as they reach its threshold. Local superstition insists that anyone who sees the dryads dance will enjoy good luck in a moment of great need shortly thereafter, but the tradition is mostly an aphorism at this point, and none of the tales say anything about dancing dryads having anything to do with Grommor's Maw.

An adventurer by the name of Bloodjack Baerrens, who recently disappeared, claimed to have seen both the dryads and the golems—and also claimed that he'd since fought other dryads and other golems elsewhere, and that he couldn't be harmed by the "soundly striking" attacks of either race. Something is clearly afoot at the cave known as Grommor's Maw, but at the moment the mysteries of the cave complex seem endless, waiting for a band of brave explorers to finally bring the truth to light.

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Prodigal Sons: 3 of 6 Feast of Fools

If we'd brought Carbuncle with us, he could have cleaned our boots." I slogged through the torrents of rain with half the swamp caked to my feet.

Phargas looked over his shoulder and muttered something both unpriestly and anatomically difficult.

As we bickered, we rounded the bend into the outskirts of a town. A smattering of stone buildings rose among the wattle and daub of humbler structures. The nearest of these, a three-story structure, blazed a merry warmth from its windows while its signpost—a buxom woman being ravished by a well-endowed devil—promised all manners of entertainment. To my surprise, Phargas stepped up onto the wooden veranda.

"We're stopping here?"

"It's a tavern, isn't it?"

"Among other things, I'd wager."

"All the more reason for us to stop. Lost souls in need of my ministry and blessings." With that, the priest strode through the door.

I followed him—purely to protect him from the riffraff that harbor in such places, of course—and immediately found myself in the center of a swirling, raucous party. Swags of yellow, red, and black hung over windows and doors. Additional bunting decorated the enormous stairwell that filled the fair side of the hall. Gambling covered half the tables, and shouts of joy and dismay came from all corners.

A burly maid grabbed me, and I found myself crushed against her ample charms as she shouted an ale-scented "Welcome, traveler!" into my face. Before I could recover

enough to respond, she spun me away into the room once more. I found Phargas sitting atop a table, pouring golden mead into an overflowing horn at his feet. He'd already gathered a half-dozen townsfolk around him, and they shouted for further displays of his divine gifts. I noticed he was wearing a jeweled brooch in the shape of a hornet. I made a note to remind him not to dress better than his master.

"This sort of welcome's more like it, eh, Phargas? Good to see these peasants know how to treat guests." A few of the villagers glared, but I waved them off with an egalitarian hand.

The priest shot me a look that might have cowed a lesser man. "Find your own flock, Pathfinder. Can't you see I'm presiding over a solemn ceremony?" As punctuation, one of the peasant-women kissed him in a most unchaste manner and took the sloshing horn from his feet.

I would have taken greater affront, had I not been distracted at that very moment by a beautiful creature, her bosom heaving to escape the confines of her chemise. She trailed a hand across my cheek and turned me to follow her toward a corner of the room. Her whispered welcome clung to her full lips with an understandable reluctance to leave.

I bowed and stepped close. "Well met, my lovely. And how may I serve you?" I had several ideas, but I wanted to be polite and allow her to make suggestions.

She pursed her lips, one finger resting against her chin. "Is it true, what the priest said? You're a Pathfinder?"

I shifted my cloak until the Glyph of the Open Road was visible. "They don't just leave these lying on the side of the road, my dear."

She smiled even brighter—a feat I hadn't thought possible—and threw her arms around my neck with a delighted squeal.

"I'm so relieved! I need your help, or I will never be free of this place."

That sounded unfortunately familiar. I pulled myself back enough to look her in the face. "And why would you want to leave, my dear? We've only just arrived."

"Not the Demon and Harlot. I mean all of Jedda. You Pathfinders have a reputation for cleverness, and I need you to help me escape my husband."

The last thing I wanted to do was get between a possessive husband and his bride. It tended to be the fast path to a stretched neck or a knife between my ribs, but she fixed me with a look so pitiful that I couldn't help but be drawn in. I begged her to tell me more.

"He stole me from my family, from the only man I ever loved—a poor village boy with a heart like a well. I could flee, but my husband would surely find me."

"And how do I fit in?"

"You're a Pathfinder. Surely you could come up with some way to smuggle me out." I could almost feel the hemp

rope about my neck, but before I could decline she leaned in close. "Please? If you can help me, I'd do *anything*." A single deep breath threatened to tumble her already well-displayed bosom out completely.

It was a persuasive argument. "Of course. My duty is clear."

She sighed in relief. "I knew you'd help. With Calistria's Ball tomorrow, we've no time to lose. My husband will be distracted, and with everyone in disguise you'll be able to sneak me away easily."

"Calistria's Ball. Of course!" I hoped my feigned enthusiasm covered up the fact that I knew nothing of whatever backwater celebration we had stumbled into.

She giggled. "How appropriate that I be freed on the day that celebrates Calistria cuckolding the Lord in Iron. I can't thank you enough." Her smile darkened. "I must go, and soon. Look for me tomorrow, cloaked like a swan maiden."

"Wait, what's your name?"

"Anra," she whispered, then kissed me on the cheek and ran past me. I turned to follow, but she leapt into the arms of a handsome, neatly bearded man wearing a well-used breastplate and carrying a longsword at his hip. He looked perfectly familiar with the arts of combat, and more than willing to resort to violence if need warranted.

For all the distaste of her marriage, she certainly put on a good show for his sake, and kissed him with eager passion. I decided to lose myself in the crowd rather than let him spot me.

I woke in the common room to find Phargas with all his belongings laid out on the table before him, including the silver we'd liberated from the convent. My first assumption was that we had been robbed, and Phargas was taking inventory. I immediately checked my purse and found it lighter than expected.

"I took the liberty of using your funds to pay for our lodging last night." Phargas smiled. "Though I negotiated something of an ecclesiastical discount."

"So long as the price was fair." Phargas started to protest, and I waved my hand. "I procured employment for us."

He scowled. "I hope it's something you can do on the road. I'd like to put some more distance between us and the nuns before we try selling this."

"It won't take long. There's a terribly distressed damsel, desperate to be rescued from her unhappy marriage." When his scowl deepened, I smiled. "She'll be very appreciative."

"And you think we can rescue her without getting ourselves killed in the process?"

"Please, these people are peasants. Besides, everyone will be wearing masks today. It'll be easy."

He started repacking his bags, each item placed like a sliding block puzzle until they fit together perfectly. "Masks? For what?"

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"It's some feast day of Calistria. I figured you knew that."
 "I can't keep track of every made-up holiday in every village we come across. Not every festival is endorsed by the church."

I nodded. "So, you'll help me?"
 He shrugged the pack onto his back. "I suppose, so long as it doesn't take too long."

I arranged my cloak and started toward the door. The burly serving girl who had greeted me the night before came running from the kitchen. "You can't go out without a mask!"

Phargas stepped between us, his hands spread wide. "We are but poor wanderers, my child. We have no masks to hide our faces from Calistria."

The girl blushed and curtsied to the priest, then went behind the bar. She pulled up a heavy wooden box and rummaged through it. "I think we have a few leftover masks from last year's festival. They'll be old, but nobody will notice, right?"

"Of course not." He took a step forward and she gave an exclamation of success.

"Here we go!" She held up two masks, one a plain half-face in scarlet, the other a Baby Zora. My heart sank until I realized the priest was grabbing the cherub-cheeked plant-mask instead. I snatched the red mask and tied it around my head before he could change his mind.

He turned back to face us with the mask in place. "How do I look?"

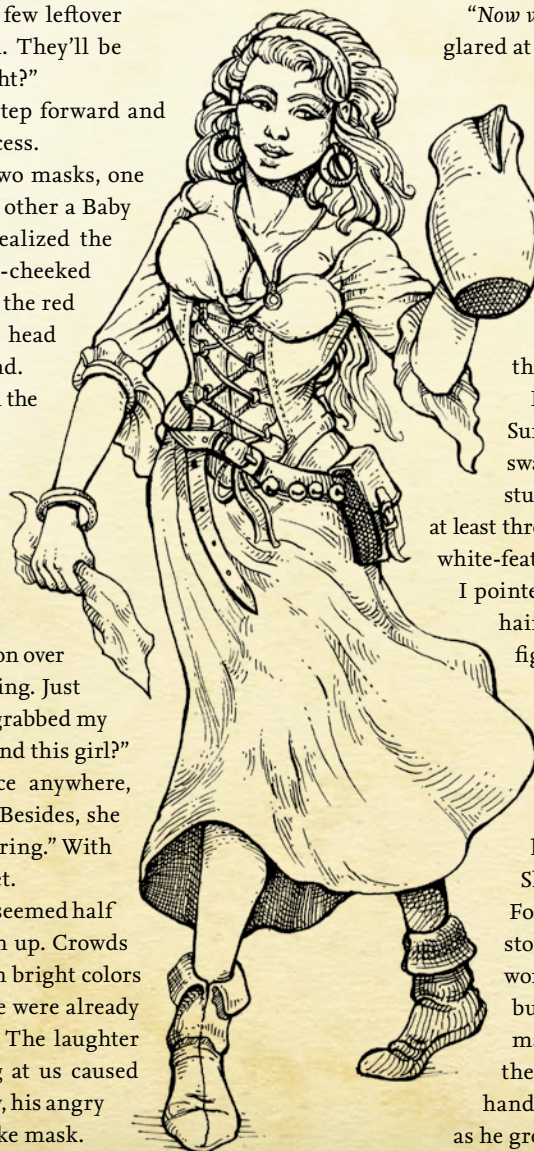
The barmaid giggled, and I snickered at the sight of him in the impish familiar's mask. I recovered as well as I could, and applauded. "You look perfect."

He raised a hand in benediction over the maid, and muttered a blessing. Just before we reached the door, he grabbed my elbow. "So how do you plan to find this girl?"

"I would know her radiance anywhere, no matter how well disguised. Besides, she told me what mask she'd be wearing." With that, we emerged onto the street.

For a little-known festival, it seemed half the River Kingdoms had shown up. Crowds thronged the streets, dressed in bright colors and garish masks. Many people were already drunk, despite the early hour. The laughter of a party of revelers pointing at us caused Phargas to drag me into an alley, his angry eyes out of place in the child-like mask.

"Anra makes a convincing argument."



"Why are they laughing?"
 "Most people don't expect to see a grown man wearing a Baby Zora mask. That's all."

"A what? Who in the hells is Zora?"
 I looked at him, completely nonplussed. "Pickle Lily's familiar?" No recognition dawned in his eyes. "Don't tell me you've never been to a Clever Nella show."

"I have no idea what you're talking about."
 I chuckled. "It's a puppet show. They're hilarious." His mood didn't seem to improve, so I quickly added, "Baby Zora's a mandrake root. A sorceress's familiar. We've got to get you to a show. It'll all make sense afterward."

"Still, I should choose something less obtrusive." He touched the side of his mask and uttered a few quick prayers. When he was done the mask twisted itself into a stylized devil. "This should keep the rubes at bay."

"Now we all can do as we like," I muttered. He glared at me, and I shrugged.

"So is your damsel in distress in one of these Nella masks or something?" He strode past me, headed for the mouth of the alley.

"Hardly. She said I'd find her in the guise of a swan maiden. That should be easy enough to spot."

"Indeed. Is she the one on the corner there? Or the one crossing the street with a man on each arm?"

I joined him at the mouth of the alley. Sure enough, two different women in swan masks battled for my attention. I studied the street a moment and spotted at least three more, all dressed extravagantly, with white-feather masks and expensive gowns.

I pointed at the one farthest from us. Flaxen hair fell from behind the mask, and her figure certainly looked right. "There she is. Come on."

The damsel turned as I reached her, and I slipped my arm through hers. "Quickly, my dear. We've got to get out of here before your husband finds us."

She screamed.
 For a moment, the whole festival stopped and looked at us. I released the woman and tried to stammer an apology, but it was too late. A man wearing a mask of hammered iron strode across the suddenly open space toward us. His hand drifted to the dueling blade at his hip as he growled a challenge.

"Forgive me, forgive me. It was an honest mistake!" I held up my hands up to show that, not only had I removed them from his ladyfriend, I was also unarmed.

"It'll be an honest mistake when I gut you like a river eel, as well."

"It's a feast day, good sirrah. I carry no steel. Besides, for fighters of our respective talents to cross blades requires more space." The appeal to his ego bought me a few moments. "Do you know the Demon and Harlot?"

He glanced at the woman quickly, then answered, "I know where it is. I've never been inside."

"Allow me to grab my blade, and I will meet you in the alley beside that fine establishment. There you can have the retribution you require."

He stared at me for a moment before his face split into a cruel smile. "I'll be waiting. Bring someone to carry your corpse." I swallowed as he spun on his heel and strode off, his swan maiden close at his heels.

"So much for keeping a low profile," Phargas muttered.

I shrugged. "It was an honest mistake. He just needs some time to cool off."

"You can't randomly accept duels from people."

"What are you talking about? I didn't accept anything. I told him where to meet me, and said he'd get what he deserved. In this case, that's time to calm down."

"Somehow, I doubt your failure to show will relax him."

I sighed. "Oh, fine. Have it your way." I walked up to a man in a blue doublet wearing a mask that was doubtlessly supposed to be intimidating, but fell short of the mark. "Hey, you!"

The man turned to face me. "Yeah?"

"Did you see that guy in the iron mask?"

"What guy?" He looked at me skeptically.

"Big guy, dressed in red. Iron mask. He told me to tell you to meet him at the Demon and Harlot."

"Why's that?"

"He said you owed him money. Half a copper, because your mother wasn't worth full price."

The oaf bellowed and took a swing at me, but I was quick to scramble out of his way. I held up my hands and tried to look defenseless. "Those were his words, I swear! He said he'll meet you in front of the Demon and Harlot!" The man looked at me, rage boiling in his eyes before he rolled up his sleeves and pushed past. I turned to Phargas and grinned. "There, now he has someone to play with. Problem solved."

"You'll forgive me for not feeling reassured."

"It'll be fine. By the time they figure out what happened, you and I will be long gone. There's nothing to worry about." I cracked my knuckles and stretched. "Still, we'd best find the girl quickly."

"Do you have a better idea than offending every woman in white feathers from here to the waterfront?"

I walked in the opposite direction from the Demon and Harlot, weaving in and out of the crowd. "Really, Phargas, you should appreciate her cleverness. By convincing so many other women to wear similar outfits, she's made it easy for us to smuggle her out of the city."

Shouts and boisterous music grew louder as we approached the river, and I quickly saw the reason. Boats of every size clogged the waterway, each one decorated with flowers and paper to transform them into great floating stages. Revelers cavorted and hurled trinkets into the screaming crowds on shore, and the noise made it difficult to hear one's own thoughts.

Phargas tugged at my arm, then gestured to a balcony. A capital idea—from such a vantage point, finding Anra would be simple. He scampered up the stone wall of the building with impressive dexterity, then tossed a rope down to me. With a modest effort, I joined him and looked out over the party that reigned below us.

It was possibly the largest number of people I had seen in a single place. The floats extended up the river and out of sight around a bend, and depicted everything from the raising of the Starstone to the fall of Cheliox.

Swan maidens were a common theme as well, though I could see few who had both the blonde hair and exquisite figure of my quarry. The effort of this service was beginning to outweigh any sense of reward.

"There he is! Out of the way!" A familiar voice cut through the din of the crowd and Phargas and I turned to see the iron-masked duelist pointing up at us. Beside him stood the blue-clad buffoon I had sent to join him. The two had apparently become fast friends, which boded ill for my continued safety.

"Master Pathfinder, I humbly suggest we forget the girl and find an exit instead."

"Excellent idea, Master Priest. Any suggestions?"

Below us, the two men were shoving through the crowd in our direction. Phargas glanced down, and then to the next balcony over. "Only one. Run!" Without another thought for my safety, he vaulted from our balcony to the next.

I glanced at the crowd below, then followed him. The ground seemed painfully far beneath me before I landed in a heap on the balcony floor.

By the time I had recovered my feet, Phargas had already leapt again, to a perch crowded with women who giggled and squealed at his unexpected arrival. They seemed less excited when I landed among them; a result of the reduced novelty, no doubt. The leap had put some distance between us and our pursuit, though the two men would close the gap quickly. Unfortunately, we were also out of balconies.

A shout from below questioned my parentage, and promised painful death. As I watched, the two men entered our building; any moment they would reach the balcony. Rather than wait, I jumped.

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More accurately, I took a running jump for the nearest float, which passed by the balcony on the river below. I landed poorly, and rolled to a stop at the feet of a bear-like man on a great wooden throne. He laughed as his associates flung jewelry from a chest into the adoring crowds. For a moment, my mouth watered at the sight of the overflowing box; then I realized that the jewels were costume paste.

Phargas landed and stepped forward with a grandiose bow. The shouting men and squealing women in our wake must have impressed our host, as he jumped down from the chair, laughing, and swept Phargas into a tight embrace.

"Your Grace, you honor us with your presence!" his voice boomed. "Everyone! A duke of hell has joined us! Make way, make way!"

The other occupants of the float included a broad assortment of legendary characters, including a group of armored men dressed as the four Archdaemons of Abaddon. Charon fixed me with a hollow-skull stare as though he knew me, and my soul chilled until yet another swan maiden pulled him away. Meanwhile our new host was still talking.

"...must join us for dinner this evening. It shall be a feast befitting one of your priestly rank, my friend. Come! Ride with us, and at the end of the parade you can rest yourselves in my estate."

Phargas looked at me. "Really, my companion and I should return to the goddess's temple."

"Nonsense! The temple-maids will be busy enough without your help. By all means bring your fool with you, but I won't take no for an answer."

I rose to correct the gentleman regarding Phargas's and my relative stations, but Phargas fixed me with a gaze that made me decide dinner would be soon enough to set the record straight.

"So he invited you because you're a priest of Calistria." I glared at the yellow-clad form of Phargas as we walked along. His Asmodeus mask had been replaced by a piece of sheer gold silk.

"Exactly. So if you ruin this meal for us, I will personally see to it that your nethers become a nesting place for every stinging insect in this stretch of swamp."

I swallowed at the vivid imagery. "Just make certain he understands you're traveling with me to help document my deeds as a Pathfinder."

If he heard me, our entry into the great hall made it irrelevant. It was as though I had returned to my father's table at last. Roast swine graced the centerboard, while an entire aviary of broiled birds was arranged in flocks around it. Cheeses and breads of every description were heaped in the available spaces, and nuts from across the River Kingdoms waited for persistent fingers to winnow them open. My stomach rumbled in appreciation.

I took a seat next to Phargas and noticed the swan maiden from the float staring at me. No doubt she was taken with me—I was likely the first noble she'd seen besides the backwater aristocracy in charge of the city. I blew her a kiss.

Phargas seemed about to say something when our host entered, the four archdaemons following him. At his arrival, the smattering of other guests around the table burst into cheers, and with a wave of his hand he called forth a troupe of attendants to serve the feast.

Between courses, I noticed the swan maiden's eyes on me yet again. I raised my cup. "My lady, in all my travels as a Pathfinder, I have never met woman of such loveliness." A bit thick perhaps, but no matter.

She looked to her plate—embarrassed, no doubt—but our host, seated next to her, perked up. "A Pathfinder you say? And have you come to Jedda to document Calistria's Ball?"

I took a drink of wine and stood. "But of course! And good that we had, for we encountered a damsel in distress that only the skills of my companion and I could rescue."

The nobleman leaned forward. "Indeed? I would hear more, friend—pray regale us with your tales while we eat."

I would be a poor guest to refuse so earnest a request, and I launched into the tale. Midway through my description of the mystery woman's décolletage, Phargas poked me in the leg with his knife. I slapped his hand away.

Our host's hands were flat on the table now, and he seemed quite interested, so I continued. "For all her beauty, this poor damsel was married to an oaf of low breeding. He beat her regularly, and walled her away from the world. Still, she managed to escape last night and spoke with devotion of a young man for whom her heart had remained pure. I had to help her, my lord. I'm certain you would have done the same in my shoes."

The nobleman's hands had changed to fists, though his tone remained level. "Pray, did this vision of loveliness have a name, that I might aid your quest? If she is so sorely used by her husband, perhaps my status as lord of Jedda will convince him to release her."

"An excellent point, your grace. Anra, she said her name was. Too plain for such a rare creature, but surely she would be easy for you to find."

"Sadly, it would seem I can't help you. For you see, I already have an Anra of my own." At this, he pulled the mask from the swan maiden beside him and revealed the girl from the Demon and Harlot. In my mind I went through the various attributes I had assigned to the woman and the various denigrating terms I had used to describe the husband. I risked a glance at Phargas, but he had buried his face in his hands, no doubt praying for some way out of this.

"What, gone silent now? Come, Pathfinder, tell us more of this woman's loveliness, of her husband's monstrosity."

My hands came up to remind him I was unarmed. "My lord must understand, I may have elaborated certain aspects of the truth in exchange for a more entertaining story."

"How fortunate, then, that I have someone who can support you. Seren! Present yourself." The archdaemon Charon stepped into the center of the tables, and pulled off his mask to reveal the scarred visage from the tavern.

The man fixed me with a glare, then saluted his lord. "How may I serve?"

"You are the captain of my guards, and my wife's personal bodyguard. Pray, did anything like this happen yesterday?"

"To be clear, my lord ordered me to accept her word as your own. She ordered me to remain outside the bedroom while she entertained not just the foppish idiot, but the priest as well."

I felt the imagined noose constricting and tugged at the collar of my doublet. Beside me, Phargas eased a roll of parchment from his boot.

"I cannot fault you for obeying my commands, Seren." The nobleman stood and handed Anra to the waiting captain. "As for you, my dear, I won't say I'm not disappointed. Perhaps I shall become the ogre your lover has accused me of being. Seren, take her to her quarters and see to it she remains there."

The pair marched out of the room, with the girl stopping long enough to spit an epithet at me, rather literally. I wiped my face while our host turned back to us. Behind him, the other archdaemons were readying weapons.

"I must credit you, Pathfinder." The noble's voice sounded like a death knell tolling. "I knew your order was bold, but to cuckold me and then accept my hospitality? That's gutsy. Of course, if word got out, I would be a laughingstock, so I've no choice but to have you both killed. The burden of rule, you know." He gave a helpless shrug and turned to his costumed guards. "Kill them."

Phargas shoved me into a side corridor as the guards charged. I started to protest that we'd never outrun the guards when he read something from the parchment and a stone wall covered the mouth of the hall.

I gaped. "Truly the goddess is merciful."

"Yes, she has a soft spot for fools and cuckolds. Hurry up, that won't stop them long."

"I didn't actually..."

"Neither did I, which won't matter a whit when the guards catch us." He ran to a window at the end of the hall and looked out. The safety of the ground lay at least twenty feet below.

"That's a long jump, priest."

He grabbed me by the collar and shoved me out the open window. "Good thing you'll fall then."

I screamed, but at a word from Phargas I drifted to the ground and landed as gently as a feather. He jumped after

me and landed with ease. I pointed at another window, which had a knotted rope hanging down from it. "That would have been easier, priest."

"Don't question the blessings of the goddess. Just run."

After a half-hour's flight we made our way to the water's edge. Unfortunately, the only boat in sight was crewed by a mud-covered man with a neat beard and breastplate, and his buxom but equally mud-covered woman. When they saw us on shore, they paddled faster to get away. I turned to the priest. "I had hoped for a little more traffic than this."

Phargas hoisted his pack and smiled. "The goddess can be fickle. I find in such situations it's better to rely on my feet than prayers. Shall we?"

I took a deep breath and started off along the river's edge.



"Damn Seren. Next time I'm arrested for adultery, I intend to deserve it."

KINGMAKER PART 3 OF 6



Bestiary

A week earlier we would have stood in the center of a quaint farming village at the edge of a sea of yellow grass. Cobblestone paths still bore the remnants of lives that once played out here: rustically-made hogsheds, their contents spilled and devoured by crows; an upturned cart, shattered like a ship upon a merciless coast; a dropped dolly, button eyes vacant, dress torn. But of the owners themselves, there was nothing. Even their riches remained amid the rubble of crushed daub and fallen thatches. Perhaps that was the most telling. Every roof, every tower, every shed lay crushed and collapsed, as if smashed by the fist of an angry god. My porters would stay to search for the residents—and their treasures—yet by my command we move on, for greater than desire for riches is my fear of that wicked god's return.

—From *The Record of Truan Tolavai*

Creature Type

- Aberration
- Animal
- Construct
- Dragon
- Fey
- Humanoid
- Magical Beast
- Monstrous Humanoid
- Ooze
- Outsider
- Plant
- Undead
- Vermin

Climate

- Cold
- Extrplanar
- Temperate
- Tropical

Environment

- Desert
- Forest/Jungle
- Hill
- Mountain
- Plain
- Ruins
- Swamp
- Sky
- Underground
- Urban
- Water

The *Pathfinder* Bestiary enters the wild expanses of savage Iobaria this month, revealing several of that grim land's denizens and dangers. Amid the ruins of empires lost to plague and ages of decadence roam the savage children of the realm's dark history. While the steps of civilized humanoids are far from unknown in this realm, the prints of hooves and claws mark the passage of mysterious Iobaria's true masters. Whether these strange beasts and beings intrude into adventures in the Stolen Lands or adventures seek to discover the mysteries of their ancient homes, the passage to Iobaria, Casmaron's deadly north, stands open.

WANDERING MONSTERS

With this volume's adventure, a whole new region of the Stolen Lands unfurls before explorers: the Nomen Heights, part of the rocky eastern frontier of not just the River Kingdoms, but of all Avistan. Beyond the barrier of the Tors of Levenies, a lesser range of the Icerime Peaks to the north, spread hills that gradually descend into the plains of Iobaria. There, amid the tall grasses, roam fiercely proud tribes of centaurs and hide the ruins of watchtowers that once guarded the borderlands between west and east.

Those proposing to explore the Nomen Heights should expect many hardships, from rockslides and barriers amid the nearly vertical cliffs of the tors, to those savage beasts

capable of surviving amid the stones of the Stolen Lands' most rugged expanse. GMs who seek to bring a heightened degree of both danger and realism to their adventures in this new land should look to the environmental rules in Chapter 13 of the *Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook*, especially those related to hills and mountains. While the Tors of Levenies are small enough to have relatively little snow, making avalanches unlikely, landslides in the form of collapses (see page 415 of the *Pathfinder RPG Core Rulebook*) are not uncommon. Windstorms, often devoid of rain, also whip across the eastern plains, especially imperiling any caught climbing or in other precarious situations during such times. Depending on the time of year—typically during the fall and winter months—rains from Casmaron's great central sea and even snow might create their own hindrances to exploration. Yet all of this says nothing of the deadly beasts that inhabit the region, any number of which might cut even a well-prepared expedition lethally short.

As the eastern half of the Nomen Heights borders on the realm of Iobaria, numerous creatures from that realm are regularly seen in this part of the Stolen Lands. GMs seeking to expand their encounters might look to Bestiary entries in coming volumes of the Kingmaker Adventure Path for more beasts and denizens of that deadly realm.

Nomen Heights Random Encounters

Lake/River	Mountains	Plains	Hills	Encounter	CR	Source
1–6	1–3	—	—	1d4 tatzlwyrms	4	<i>Pathfinder</i> #31
7–14	4–11	—	1–8	1 grizzly bear	4	<i>Bestiary</i> 31
15–17	12–17	1–4	—	1d4 cockatrices	5	<i>Bestiary</i> 48
—	18–26	5–10	9–14	1d4 giant eagles	5	<i>Bestiary</i> 118
18–26	27–35	11–23	15–27	1 manticore	5	<i>Bestiary</i> 199
27–35	—	24–31	28–36	1d4 spriggans	5	see page 28
—	36–42	32–34	37–42	1 wyvern	6	<i>Bestiary</i> 282
36–41	—	—	43–46	1 will-o'-wisp	6	<i>Bestiary</i> 277
42–49	43–47	35–40	47–55	2d4 worgs	6	<i>Bestiary</i> 280
50–64	—	41–51	56–43	1d6 elk	6	<i>Pathfinder</i> #31
—	48–53	52–55	44–45	1 chimera	7	<i>Bestiary</i> 44
—	—	56–59	46–51	1 bulette	7	<i>Bestiary</i> 39
—	54–63	—	52–57	1d6 gargoyles	7	<i>Bestiary</i> 137
—	64–70	60–63	58–62	1d6 cyclopes	8	<i>Bestiary</i> 52
—	—	64–75	63–67	2d6 centaurs	8	<i>Bestiary</i> 42
65–70	—	76–80	—	1d4 blodeuwedds	8	see page 78
71–83	—	81–87	68–75	1 mastodon	9	<i>Bestiary</i> 128
84–91	71–78	88–93	76–82	1 roc	9	<i>Bestiary</i> 236
—	79–84	—	83–86	1d4 stygiras	9	see page 86
92–98	85–91	94–100	87–93	1 peluda	10	see page 84
—	92–96	—	94–96	1 great cyclops	12	see page 82
99–100	97–100	—	97–100	1 silver dragon	14	<i>Bestiary</i> 110

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Blodeuwedd

Clothed in verdant lichen and flowers of broom, meadowsweet, and oak, this shapely maiden has skin of velvety moss and living grass for hair. An eldritch serenity graces her countenance as she approaches, her outstretched, root-like hands brushing the tips of the tallest grass—the wind itself whispers around her feet as patches of clover, heather, and milkweed mark her every step.

Blodeuwedd

CR 6



XP 2,400

CN Medium fey

Init +5; **Senses** low-light vision; Perception +11

Aura allergen (DC 16, 1d6 rounds)

DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 16, flat-footed 14 (+5 Dex, +1 dodge, +4 natural)

hp 66 (7d6+35)

Fort +7, **Ref** +10, **Will** +8

DR 5/cold iron

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee 2 claws +8 (1d8+4)

Ranged mwk sling +9 (1d4+4)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 7th; concentration +11)

Constant—*Speak with plants*

At will—*dancing lights*, *entangle* (DC 15), *plant growth*, *whispering wind*

3/day—*deep slumber* (DC 17), *modify memory* (DC 18), *spike growth* (DC 17)

1/day—*goodberry*, *hallucinatory terrain* (DC 18), *lesser geas* (DC 17)

STATISTICS

Str 18, **Dex** 21, **Con** 21, **Int** 14, **Wis** 17, **Cha** 18

Base Atk +3; **CMB** +7; **CMD** 23

Feats Combat Casting, Dodge, Mobility, Weapon Finesse

Skills Diplomacy +14, Escape Artist +10, Handle Animal +9, Heal +9, Knowledge (nature) +12, Perception +11, Perform (wind) +12, Sense Motive +11, Stealth +15, Survival +10;

Racial Modifiers +4 Stealth in grasslands

Languages Aklo, Common, Sylvan

SQ change shape, verdant step, wild empathy +10

ECOLOGY

Environment temperate plains

Organization solitary, pair, or gathering (3–8)

Treasure double standard (masterwork sling with 20 sling bullets, other treasure)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Allergen Aura (Ex) A blodeuwedd exudes an aura of pollen and other irritating allergens that forces living creatures within 30 feet to make a DC 18 Fortitude save or become sickened, coughing and sneezing for 1d6 rounds. Creatures who successfully save cannot be affected by the same blodeuwedd's aura for 24 hours. A blodeuwedd can suppress this aura at will as a free action. The save DC is

Constitution-based.

Change Shape (Su) A blodeuwedd can assume a single unique humanoid shape or the form of a prairie owl once per day for up to 7 hours as if using the spell *polymorph*. These hours do not need to be consecutive and a blodeuwedd can return to her normal shape as a free action.

Nature's Infusion (Su) Once per day, while surrounded by any field or fertile plain, a blodeuwedd may infuse herself with borrowed life energy from nearby plants and nutrients in the ground. This ability functions exactly like *false life* (CL 7th) but lasts only 1 hour.

Verdant Step (Su) Every stride taken by a blodeuwedd causes small plants, grasses, and wildflowers to sprout from the ground, though she can suppress this effect if she desires. While within a plain of tall grass, brush, or similar undergrowth, a blodeuwedd may also step through such plant-life and emerge at any other point within the same field (potentially miles away). This ability functions similar to *transport via plants*, but a blodeuwedd can only transport herself and does not require a plant equal to her size. This ability is usable three times per day.

Wild Empathy (Ex) This works like the druid's wild empathy class feature, except a blodeuwedd has a +6 racial bonus on the check. A blodeuwedd with druid levels adds this racial modifier to her wild empathy checks.

The mysterious blodeuwedds stand apart from dryads, their tree-bound sisters of the forest, instead watching over the open plains and prairies. They frequently guard the approaches to primeval, fey enclaves as well as various gateways and entry points into the First World—a task they take very seriously. Blodeuwedds hide such regions behind veils of illusion and trickery, quietly observing anyone passing through their lands, and occasionally sending mysterious messages to warn them away or to summon allies that can drive them out. Even when not standing sentinel over a point of otherworldly importance, blodeuwedds find spots of particular natural beauty, transforming such fields—usually only a few acres in size—into sites of unearthly lushness and natural wonder. A typical blodeuwedd stands a little over 5 feet tall, weighs 120 pounds, and may live up to 800 years.

ECOLOGY

Instead of developing a lifelong bond with trees, blodeuwedds hold an affinity for open grasslands, moors, and plains. They survive off the land, taking nourishment from all that nature provides, while also looking after prairie animals in times of drought or lean winters. Unlike dryads, blodeuwedds have no dependency on the plants around them; they can willingly leave their chosen moor to visit their fey kin, scout their domain in owl form, or even mingle with frontier communities, changing shape to appear elven or human.

Every 15 or so years, blodeuwedds may reproduce through a natural ritual of fertility known as the Blooming, a process by which they commune with the adopted plants of their surrounding field. At the height of the spring season, they then exchange pollen with every flower within 300 yards, a complicated and sensuous act that eventually allows a blodeuwedd to conceive. It takes 6 months to carry a new blodeuwedd to term, and they frequently come together to act as midwives during this time to ensure successful deliveries for one another. Some tales tell of blodeuwedds displaced from their homes or in captivity capable of performing the Blooming by drawing off the life force of amorous men, ending in the withering death of the would-be father. Such legends give blodeuwedds a reputation for being dangerous seductresses in some regions.

Blodeuwedds typically establish their own prairie holdings within 7 miles of each other for mutual support and ease of communication.

HABITAT & SOCIETY

Blodeuwedds make their homes out of sod, carving them from the landscape and then encouraging prairie grass to grow over the exterior to hide them. These elaborate structures resemble small rises and hillocks that overlook ley lines and fairy paths between sites of great power and importance to the fey, which the blodeuwedds jealously guard from non-fey creatures. Most fey recognize such service by referring to blodeuwedds with honorific titles meant to curry their favor. As a result, many blodeuwedds set themselves up as queens or wardens to receive tribute from favored kin who pass through their realms.

Blodeuwedds also rely on plant growth and their ability to speak with plants to manage the surrounding fields, encouraging them to grow into complex mazes of hedgerows, tangles, and thickets to better shape their territory. Often they use *hallucinatory terrain* to hide the best routes through these areas. Interlopers typically find themselves impeded by *entangle* or areas of *spike growth* when they enter a blodeuwedd's territory. Any who persist then become targeted by *deep slumber* or *modify memory* to lead them in false directions.

More rarely, a blodeuwedd might aid one on an important quest, but she usually requires

Blodeuwedds in Mythology

The original blodeuwedd legend stems from Welsh mythology. She appeared as a woman made from flowers and prairie grass who became the wife of Lleu Llaw Gyffes, an unusually gifted child cursed by his own mother to never marry a human. However, after their marriage, Blodeuwedd soon turned treacherous to her new husband, tricking him into revealing the only method by which he could be killed and then arranging for a new lover to slay him so she and her love could claim his lands for themselves. Eventually, Lleu returned to punish Blodeuwedd and the gods turned her into an owl.

some form of guarantee before agreeing to do so. All blodeuwedds possess tremendous knowledge of and influence over the lands and creatures that border their fields. They often involve themselves in the politics of elves, gnomes, and humans who live nearby—even if only to warn against destructive trespasses or wasteful farming practices. They enjoy playing wind flutes, dancing under the stars, and chasing one another's fairy lights like fireflies among the tall grass.

BLODEUWEDD QUEENS

Particularly old and active blodeuwedds—typically the eldest within a region that more than 10 blodeuwedds inhabit—sometimes ascend to the status of queens, gaining additional power and prestige among their own kind. They develop a greater affinity for the lands they rule and attract even more followers.

The following adjustments to a standard blodeuwedd represent a young blodeuwedd queen at CR 8. More powerful varieties typically add class levels in druid or sorcerer, both of which are considered favored classes

for a blodeuwedd queens.




- 9 Hit Dice
- +2 natural armor
- +4 Strength, +6 Constitution, +6 Charisma
- **Additional Spell-Like Abilities (Sp):** Always active—*endure elements*, *nondetection*; At will—*create water*, *detect animals or plants*; 3/day—*command plants*, *move earth*, *summon nature's ally IV*; 1/day—*fire seeds*, *plant shape II*. These spell-like abilities and all others function at CL 11th.



Kingmaker Part 3 of 6

CLAWBAT

A leathery piece of skin stretched across a frame of joints and bony knobs beats awkwardly through the air. Eyes glare from the folds of its thick wings, writhing tentacles surround its sucker-like maw, and a long, thin tongue darts forth seemingly at random to lash the air around it.

CLAWBAT	CR 1			
XP 400				
N Small magical beast				
Init +3; Senses darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, blood scent; Perception +2				
DEFENSE				
AC 15, touch 14, flat-footed 12 (+1 armor, +3 Dex, +1 size)				
hp 11 (2d10)				
Fort +3, Ref +6, Will +2				
OFFENSE				
Speed 10 ft., fly 50 ft. (average)				
Melee 1 bite +6 (1d4–2 plus bleed)				
Special Attacks bleed (1), distraction (DC 11)				
STATISTICS				
Str 7, Dex 17, Con 10, Int 2, Wis 14, Cha 10				
Base Atk +2; CMB –1; CMD 12				
Feats Flyby Attack ^B , Weapon Finesse				
Skills Fly +5, Stealth +12				
ECOLOGY				
Environment temperate hills and ruins				
Organization solitary, pair, or clutch (3–16)				
Treasure none				
SPECIAL ABILITIES				
Blood Scent (Ex) A clawbat can detect any creature at less than maximum hit points as if it had scent. Those at full hit points cannot be detected by the blood scent ability.				
Distraction (Ex) A clawbat's lengthy tongue whips around its body as it feeds, lapping up the blood from wounded creatures nearby. Every round a clawbat may choose either a creature it attacks or any creature it passes adjacent to as it moves. If the target is at less than full hit points, it must make a DC 11 Fortitude save or be nauseated for 1 round. The save DC is Constitution-based.				

Clawbats, or einchadu, as they're known to the tribes of greater Iobaria, haunt the desolate expanses of north-eastern Avistan and the rugged lands beyond. Swarming forth from their shadowy dens to hunt by night, these strange predators thirst for blood, scavenging from the victims of greater nocturnal hunters and stalking those foolish enough not to fear dangers in the dark. Drawn by the scent of spilled blood, clawbats fearlessly follow deadly beasts, and more than one traveler has narrowly escaped a predator's nearly lethal ambush only to find his luck change as a swarm of wings and eyes descend upon him.

The span of an average clawbat's dual pairs of wings stretches 3 feet wide, lifting aloft rubbery bodies weighing 2 to 4 pounds. Tales of more monstrous clawbats, with wings that blot out the stars as they swoop away with children and small animals, also pass through the civilized lands of Iobaria. Such overgrown clawbats might be constructed by making use of the giant creature simple template.

ECOLOGY

Clawbats are scavengers and opportunistic hunters. They rarely attack creatures larger than rodents or birds unless the creatures—or those traveling with them—have been weakened by a stronger attacker. Even the presence of such a hunter is not enough to deter an ever-hungry clawbat, which is drawn to attack bloodied creatures in the thick of battle.

Clawbats are poor fighters; they prefer to fly past victims, strike quickly to draw blood, and then make pass after pass, aggravating their victims' existing wounds with their ribbon-like tongues. This tactic rarely wins the scavengers more than a drop or two of nourishment per attack, driving them to harass a victim until it drops. When the wounds of clawbats' prey prove too insignificant to fell it, clawbats attack more directly, circling to peel away strip after strip of flesh in wet grabs of their tentacular maws. After their prey has fallen to the pain of a dozen such wounds, clawbats land and vigorously lap up their meal until their bellies are bloated with gore.

Aiding clawbats in their hunts is their acrid saliva, a stinging milky-white fluid that possesses an anticoagulant quality, causing their bites to leave messy wounds that bleed until treated. This effect allows clawbats to surprise attack most Small creatures and wait safely out of reach until the prey collapses. Healthy larger prey can typically withstand the assault of a lone clawbat, but a whole clutch of the creatures might easily throw even a sturdy beast into panicked, bleeding terror. The freedom with which clawbat wounds bleed also serves to attract other clawbats in the vicinity, and a few scratches might potentially bring an entire clutch down upon even a slightly wounded creature.

Clawbat eyes are exceedingly abnormal, being nearly flat, yet still functional. As the creatures' eyes are set upon their wings, the constant flapping gives the clawbats a constantly shifting view of the area around them, but particularly the land below—an experience which would seem terribly jarring to any creature not used to the experience. The eyes are one-sided, occupying only the inner part of their thick, fleshy wings, and are lidless, being constantly watered by ducts surrounding each eye. The profuse watering of these organs causes clawbats to fling a fine spray as they move, which often serves as a victim's first warning of impending danger.

Other flying creatures, such as hawks, eagles, and owls, make up the clawbats' natural predators. The sounds of these raptors can dissuade clawbats from attacking, even in the midst of a feeding frenzy, and will send them winging straight for their roost to avoid attack. Giant centipedes occasionally invade clawbat lairs, crawling up the wall or waiting for their prey at the exit. Clawbats have little natural defense against creatures with thick exoskeletons and avoid them when it is possible to attack an easier source of food.

Clawbats can live up to 20 years, though most die earlier due to predation, accidents, or infighting.

HABITAT & SOCIETY

Clawbats are found far from heavily civilized lands, though whether this is due to civilized efforts to stamp them out or because they prefer distant, half-wild places is open to debate. They live in clutches of up to 15 members, favoring dark places that offer easy aerial access to the outside world. Each of these places must have a roost that allows the creatures to drop the 15 feet necessary to begin flying; if a stationary clawbat attempts to start flying without sufficient drop, it glides to the ground and must mount to a higher point before it can launch again. This makes them skittish in claustrophobic spaces, for they do not like to be at a disadvantage, and this in turn leads them to infest places such as ruined structures, large, open caves, and fissures.

New clutches of clawbats contain 4 to 6 young members, which depart a clutch once it has grown to exceed 15 members. The young fly 10 to 15 miles away, searching for a suitable structure or crag to shield them during the day. Once a group of clawbats leaves its original home, the members feel no loyalty to their former family and compete fiercely for resources.

On numerous occasions, mages, druids, and barbarians shamans have attempted to capture and train clawbats. While the creatures' awkwardness once they are brought to ground makes them relatively easy to capture—though frustratingly difficult to restrain given their flexibility and many squirming limbs—no documented attempt to train the beasts has ever succeeded. Even efforts paired with steady diets of blood typically end in the clawbat attacking its keeper just as often as availing themselves of the easier food source. This, and their regular attempts to feed even when critically wounded, have won the creatures a reputation for being dumbly vicious, a reputation that leads most thinking creatures to curse and move quickly to exterminate any clawbats that appear in their lands.

On the Clawbat

Sometimes you just want a good scrap, a tussle to get everyone awake and alert. For any experienced player with a character of, say, 3rd level or higher, who isn't caught alone in the open, a clawbat swarm is not only survivable—it's easily defeated.

Yet clawbats can be a challenge for novice players or characters, and are a very "deployable" monster at all times (such as when PCs have just fought off wolves in a forest but attracted the attention of an owl doing so, and are now embroiled in a stiff fight with it).

If you have a lone PC, one or two clawbats will do. If you have six or seven healthy PCs, pump up the swarm to 50 or 60. That strength provides a good reason why there's a castle full of treasure on the crag right above the village, but the villagers never go near it (rather than leaving the treasure for passing adventurers for no good reason at all).

This is, if you will, "a stirge that isn't a stirge." It's a fighter, doing repeated flyby "hit and runs" rather than trying to hang on and suck you dry of blood. A great sci-fi and fantasy writer and friend of mine, Roger Zelazny, created "stirges" (they got mangled into "stirges" while being adapted into fantasy gaming). If he were still alive, I know he'd see these guys as cousins to his originals, not copies.

—Ed Greenwood



KINGMAKER PART 3 OF 6

CYCLOPS, GREAT

The land quivers with every movement of this ferocious titan. A mountain of horrible, bulging muscles covered in a hide as thick as stone, the misshapen humanoid swings a club larger than most trees with terrifying ease. Above a vast, drool-slick maw thick with uneven teeth gazes a single bloodshot eye, and even higher up, a stunted but deadly sharp horn.

GREAT CYCLOPS

CR 12



XP 19,200

CE Huge humanoid

Init +1; **Senses** low-light vision; Perception +22

DEFENSE

AC 26, touch 9, flat-footed 25 (+4 armor, +1 Dex, +13 natural, -2 size)

hp 195 (17d8+119)

Fort +12, **Ref** +6, **Will** +14

Defensive Abilities ferocity, rock catching

OFFENSE

Speed 50 ft.

Melee 1 mwk greatclub +24/+19/+14 (3d8+19), 2 slams +23 (2d6+13)

Ranged rock +13 (2d6+19)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

Special Attacks powerful charge (gore, 4d8+24)

STATISTICS

Str 36, **Dex** 13, **Con** 25, **Int** 7, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 8

Base Atk +12; **CMB** +27; **CMD** 38

Feats Awesome Blow, Cleave, Diehard, Endurance, Improved Bull Rush, Iron Will, Power Attack, Staggering Critical, Throw Anything

Skills Perception +22

Languages Cyclops

SQ flash of brutality

ECOLOGY

Environment any temperate or tropical

Organization solitary, colony (2–5), or tribe (6–14)

Treasure standard (mwk greatclub, hide armor, other treasure)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Flash of Brutality (Su) Every round that a great cyclops makes an attack, there is a 5% chance that it gains a burst of savage inspiration. If this occurs, the cyclops triples the threat range of all weapons he attacks with for that round. For all of a great cyclops's natural attacks, tripling the threat range allows for a critical hit on any attack roll of 18–20. If a great cyclops is reduced to fewer than half its hit points (typically 97 or lower), its chance of gaining a flash of brutality increases to 15%. Should the cyclops have 0 hit points or fewer (conscious only due to its Diehard feat) and choose to attack, its chance of gaining a flash of brutality increases to 25%.

Degenerate giants of cyclops-kind, the legendary great cyclopes embody the rage and dark doom of this race of uncanny seers. In their eyes blaze endless possibilities

for bloodshed and terror, their myopic gazes seeming to witness the potential for infinite deaths and devastations hidden within each moment. Gigantic but dull-witted, these massive savages lurk far from the lands of civilized races, but occasionally either need or fate drives them to rampages from which few are safe. Such undeniable force brings with it a dread that, in many instances, grows to reverence, giving rise to strange cults that cloak these cyclopes amid veils of menace and dark legends.

The average great cyclops stands approximately 30 feet tall and weighs upward of 4 tons, though individuals of significantly greater size are known.

ECOLOGY

Similar in many respects to better-known cyclopes or giants, great cyclopes are primeval titans, seeming throwbacks to a lost age of cyclopean savagery or degenerates from an era of lost wonders. Whatever their origins, great cyclopes bear a brute strength and rough primitiveness lost to their smaller kin. Aside from hide tougher than leather armor and a primal slope to both their posture and brows, each of these giants possesses a thick but short horn that protrudes from the brow. Although difficult to bring to bear in most battles, the horn allows a charging great cyclops to impale its victim with incredible force.

While common cyclopes possess the uncanny ability to gaze into the future, great cyclopes lack such lucid insights. Rather, during times of strain and bloodlust, these giants often flash on scenes of even greater violence, which serves to drive their furies even further. This makes them awe-inspiring combatants, capable of causing ruin beyond belief even for beasts of such titanic size.

HABITAT & SOCIETY

Denizens of remote and primeval parts of the world, great cyclopes typically dwell in lands where none might intrude upon them—deserted islands, high craggy mountains, and stoic hill countries often provide the great caves they favor as lairs. While most avoid well-traveled or populated lands, spending much of their time hunting megafauna and even monstrous prey in the wilds, some, driven by hunger or a desperation to wander, seek out the paths and settlements of humanoids, finding that their fragile buildings are easily shattered and that the mewling creatures make savory meals.

Great cyclopes never voluntarily gather with others of their kind. Violent and selfish, the dangerous giants rarely collect in groups larger than a dozen, which are typically little more than hate-filled gangs organized around a single brutish leader. In such instances, weaker cyclopes hunt and serve their chief's whims while he spends his time idle. Only fear of the chief keep these communities together—internal violence and even death are common.

Such organization is sometimes mirrored by groups in which a lone great cyclops presses its lesser cyclops kin into service. Occasionally, though, the power structure takes on more complex arrangements, with small groups of cyclopes or other humanoids coming to revere great cyclopes, creating entire cults around the might and mystery of such beings.

CYCLOPS CULTS

Atop the bald crests of shattered hills and before maw-like rifts in mountain walls rise eerily etched rune towers, their pinnacles crowned with great, swirling eye-like symbols and thick chains rooted deep into the rock. During the nights of the full moon, on days when the sun hangs longest in the sky, and during portentous eclipses—all times when the sky seems most watchful of the lands below—the blind, the mad, and the mutilated bring shrieking sacrifices to these terrifying monoliths, climb the ancient, weather-worn stairs, and shackle terrified offerings amid the staring stones risen halfway between the earth and sky. Then comes the blaring of shrill horns and the chanting of words with long-lost meanings, the ancient chorus that summons the great cyclopes, demon and god, from his maze-like lair. The “Adoration of the Eye” is terrible but short, as the one-eyed titan makes quick work of its feast, rending limbs as it tears the frail flesh from its towering altar, devours the screaming thing, and—swiftly growing bored—wanders back to its den or off upon other depredations. Timidly, the worshipers return to the stones, reading omens in the bloody rivulets snaking down their crudely carved eyes—particularly omens which tell when to return again with a new offering to their bestial god.

Who pays homage to cyclopes varies wildly; their cults take wildly different shapes, from the beast tribes of Iobaria to the mystery cults of Iblydos. For some, the worship is all mysticism and superstition, with primitive shamans seeking insights and power from blood, the heavens, and the cyclopes’ inscrutable, all-seeing eye. For others, such veneration offers revelations into the lost ways and powers of the cyclopes, revealing and in some rare cases granting a measure of mastery over those forgotten secrets. Still others merely cloak their own cruelties and ambitions in the cloak of faith, drawing influence and might from false ceremonies and the favor of brutal giants.

Whatever their form, cyclops cults dwell on the mysteries of insight, the future, the




heavens, and the symbolic eye. To mimic their figureheads, many followers put out one of their own eyes as proof of their faith, or create—either artistically, surgically, or magically—a symbolic third eye in their forehead. Common cyclopes, many of whom become leaders and favored members of such cults, typically possess no greater insights into the ways or workings of their dubious faith than others but rarely make such failings openly known. Great cyclopes, however, often inadvertently serve as the unifying force of such cults, their great strength and ferocity lending an air of supernatural power to the cult’s workings. These monstrous giants rarely have any understanding of the workings of the cult, aside from knowing they receive offerings from it, and might even be unaware that such gifts suggest reverence. Rather, most have a simple relationship with the leader or inner circle of a cult, enforcing the leader’s might and occasionally destroying its enemies in return for victims to satiate their own cruel hungers.



KINGMAKER PART 3 OF 6

PELUDA

Shuffling forward on thunderous elephantine limbs comes an immense dragon-like beast. Its serpentine maw snaps angrily at the end of a long, sinuous neck, and steam issues forth from between its razor-sharp fangs. A powerful tail moves in rhythm with the bobbing head, displaying a wicked set of spikes. Scores of quills jut from the beast's flanks, bristling outward with menacing intent.

PELUDA	CR 10	  
XP 9,600		
NE Large dragon		
Init +5; Senses darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +16		
DEFENSE		
AC 24, touch 10, flat-footed 23 (+1 Dex, +14 natural, -1 size)		
hp 126 (11d12+55)		
Fort +14, Ref +8, Will +11		
Defensive Abilities ferocity; DR 5/magic; Immune fire, paralysis, and sleep; SR 21		
Weaknesses vulnerable tail		
OFFENSE		
Speed 30 ft., swim 30 ft.		
Melee bite +17 (1d8+10), tail slap +12 (3d6+10 plus poison quills)		
Space 10 ft.; Reach 10 ft.		
Special Attacks breath weapon (50 ft. line, 6d6 fire damage, Reflex DC 19 half, usable every 1d4 rounds), quill barrage		
STATISTICS		
Str 25, Dex 12, Con 21, Int 6, Wis 15, Cha 12		
Base Atk +11; CMB +19; CMD 30 (34 vs. trip)		
Feats Awesome Blow, Great Fortitude, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Power Attack		
Skills Climb +11, Intimidate +15, Perception +16, Stealth +10, Swim +29		
Languages Draconic		
ECOLOGY		
Environment temperate marshes and plains		
Organization solitary or pair		
Treasure double		
SPECIAL ABILITIES		

Quill Barrage (Ex) Three times per day, a peluda can bristle its quills and violently shake, sending dozens of spear-like barbs in all directions. All creatures with 15 feet of the peluda take 6d6 points of piercing damage and risk being poisoned (Reflex DC 20 halves the damage, though the victim still risks being poisoned). The save DC is Constitution-based.

Poison Quills (Ex) A peluda's back and tail are covered in sharp black quills the length of shortspears. A creature struck by a peluda's tail slap or that strikes a peluda with a melee weapon, an unarmed attack, or a natural weapon takes 1d6 points of piercing damage from the peluda's quills and risks being poisoned. Melee weapons with reach do not endanger a user in this way. Any creature that grapples a peluda takes

3d6 points of piercing damage and risks being poisoned each round the grapple persists.

Peluda poison: Quill—injury; save Fort DC 20; frequency 1/round for 6 rounds; effect 1d4 Con damage; cure 2 consecutive saves. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Vulnerable Tail (Su) A peluda can be killed by severing its tail from its body. Any attack that is not an attempt to sever its tail affects the body, including area attacks or attacks that cause piercing or bludgeoning damage. To sever the tail, an opponent must make a sunder attempt with a slashing weapon targeting the tail. The tail is considered a separate weapon with hardness 5 and hit points equal to the peluda's HD. To sever the tail, the opponent must inflict enough damage on a single blow to reduce the tail's hit points to 0 or less. A peluda can't attack with a severed tail and thereafter automatically suffers 2d6 points of bleed damage each round until it dies.

Wild dragon-kin that stalk the savage places of the world, peludas loathe all the weak, fragile creatures smaller than themselves, especially the various arrogant breeds of humanoids. Viewing themselves as true and regal dragons, these brutes seek to dominate swampy or overgrown territories but a few miles wide, driving off other creatures and despoiling the land as they please. Often their lands become littered with traces of their passage: great footprints in muddy banks, felled trees, and rotted corpses riddled with peludas' lance-like quills. Although most think themselves clever, peludas swiftly grow tired of tactics and debate, and it often takes little more than the suggestion of a trespasser to make them run amuck.

Elder peludas often appear far bulkier than their bare physical frames would suggest. As the majority of their roughly serpentine bodies bristle with lengthy quills, they look to be far stouter than they truly are with their naked reptilian necks, tails, and feet sprouting from a forest of deadly barbs. A typical 15-foot-long adult peluda can raise its head up to 8 feet off the ground and weighs approximately 300 pounds.

ECOLOGY

Peludas have a voracious appetite, gorging themselves on all manner of beasts drawn to the rivers, marshlands, and wild plains where they live. Much like a snake, these creatures can unhinge their lower jaw to swallow larger prey after pulverizing it with blows from their massive tail. They prefer to do so, however, after roasting their meal with their fiery breath. Peludas fear nothing smaller than themselves and routinely bring down larger prey even at a short distance with volleys of their poisonous quills. Their dangerous hide also acts as a defense to ward off gigantic predators like rocs or even true dragons, making peludas an unappetizing—and poisonous—meal at best.

Although most peludas prefer the cool darkness of reedy marshlands—especially sparsely forested bogs, as their quills can make navigating dense overgrowth frustrating—peludas occasionally venture further inland to enhance their diets, feeding on the livestock, crops, and people of rural communities. They see these excursions as nothing more than brief hunting sorties, often with the opportunity to cruelly ruin the fragile works of lesser creatures.

Peludas lay small clutches of eggs that never result in more than two or three young at a time. Ensuring that such limited numbers of offspring reach maturity presents a significant challenge for these violent creatures, as just as many of these young, bald peludas fall to the tempers of their parents as to attacks from interlopers or other beasts.

HABITAT & SOCIETY

Peludas often lair in caves, either caverns half-submerged in bogs or cool rents in the earth. While not exceptionally intelligent compared to other dragons, peludas possess a heightened survival instinct and a penchant for collecting interesting shards of metal from tools, armor, and weapons taken from their victims. They also swallow shiny coins, gems, and jewelry, believing it helps strengthen their quills and the potency of their fiery breath.

Occasionally a particularly cunning tribe of savage humanoids—typically lizardfolk or orcs—finds a way to assuage the temper of a peluda that lairs nearby, elevating the creature to the status of a local liege or deity. Whether the tribe believes in the dragon-kin's lordly status varies from community to community, though all pay the more powerful creature deference and many provide offerings of captives and wealth. Although peludas rarely have any actual affection for such servants—and more than one tribe has been scoured from the land in a random fit of flaming temper—all revel in the submission of weaker creatures and the gifts of gold and food they bring, as such deeds act as a balm to their typically fragile draconic egos. As nearly all peluda dwell on the fact that they lack the fearsomeness and power of true dragons, they do all they can to exhibit their ferocity and might. While the destruction they cause and the subservience of weaker creatures indulges peludas' fragile delusions, any suggestion that they are not every bit as mighty as their draconic peers—especially from those they view as lesser creatures—throws them into a rage few provokers can hope to survive.

Peludas in Mythology

The peluda myth originally appears in European lore from medieval France. According to legend, Noah supposedly denied this spine-covered "dragon" access to his ark prior to the biblical flood which covered the world. The peluda survived by hiding itself in a cave near the rising Huisne River. Many years later, the beast resurfaced to devour livestock, destroy crops with its scorching breath, and lay waste to villages along the entire river valley.

Described as nigh invulnerable, the peluda could breathe fire like a typical dragon, slay a full-grown man with a single blow from its tail, and fire quills from its body like arrows, in addition to possessing a number of other death-dealing abilities. Like many legendary creatures, however, the peluda possessed a singular, crippling weakness—its tail. As powerful a weapon as the dragon's tail could be, once it was severed by a local hero, the peluda quickly perished.



Kingmaker Part 3 of 6

STYGIRA

Gaunt and parched, this crone-like figure moves with the predatory jerkiness of a hunting vulture. Unnaturally tall and lean, her form is all cracked flesh and stony crevices spanning a wasteland of withered gray flesh. Shattered black teeth jut from a chapped, lipless mouth that stretches beneath a high, scarred brow devoid of nose or eyes.

STYGIRA

CR 7



XP 3,200

LE Medium monstrous humanoid

Init +7; **Senses** blindsight 30 ft. (120 ft. with gem eye), scent, true seeing with gem eye; Perception +23

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 13, flat-footed 16 (+3 Dex, +6 natural)

hp 76 (8d10+32)

Fort +6, **Ref** +9, **Will** +14

DR 10/adamantine; **Immune** gaze attacks, paralysis, petrification; **SR** 18

Weaknesses light blindness

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee 2 claws +11 (1d4+3 plus stone curse)

Special Attacks gem gaze, stone curse

STATISTICS

Str 17, **Dex** 16, **Con** 18, **Int** 17, **Wis** 22, **Cha** 15

Base Atk +8; **CMB** +11; **CMD** 24

Feats Alertness, Blind-Fight, Improved Initiative, Iron Will

Skills Bluff +10, Knowledge (arcana) +11, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +11, Knowledge (religion) +11, Perception +23, Sense Motive +16, Spellcraft +11;

Racial Modifiers +4 Perception (with gemstone)

Languages Cyclops, Giant, Terran

SQ gem eye

ECOLOGY

Environment temperate hills and underground

Organization solitary, pair, or mystery (3–7)

Treasure standard (typically gemstones)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Gem Eye (Su) Stygiras possess a special connection with gemstones. While holding or otherwise in contact with a gemstone of at least the size of a human eye, a stygira can see through the gemstone like a magical eye, viewing her surroundings as if her blindsense extended to 120 feet and she were under the effects of *true seeing*, which grants her a +4 bonus on Perception checks.

Gem Gaze (Su) Shaken for 1d4 rounds, 30 feet, Fortitude DC 16 negates. The save DC is Charisma-based. A stygira can only make use of this ability while holding a gemstone.

Light Blindness Despite their effective blindness, stygiras remain sensitive to light. Abrupt exposure to bright light blinds stygiras for 1 round; on subsequent rounds, they are dazzled as long as they remain in the affected area.

Stone Curse (Su) Any creature struck by a stygira's claws must make a DC 18 Will save or be affected by a curse that gradually drains it of color, stiffens its joints, and finally turns the victim to stone. This curse proves frighteningly unpredictable, forcing another save against its effects every 1d3 hours. Any creature that is drained to 0 Dexterity or fails three saves against the curse is permanently petrified. Even if a creature is petrified and then restored to flesh, it is still affected by the curse and is petrified again upon failing its next save against the curse. A stone curse can only be removed in one of two ways: by casting *remove curse* or by spending a full hour in unobstructed natural sunlight. Magical radiance like *daylight* does not affect a stone curse, and *remove curse* does not return a petrified creature to flesh. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Stone curse: Claw—curse; *save* Will DC 18; *frequency* 1/1d3 hours; *effect* 1d6 Dex damage, failing 3 saves results in petrification; *cure* casting *remove curse* or spending 1 hour in natural sunlight

Withered hermits wrapped in tattered black rags, these scarred, eyeless crones slip through the dark crevasses of both earth and time. Degenerate inheritors of the half-remembered, collapsed cyclops civilizations, the stygiras—or stone witches, as they are often called—command strange secrets of the earth and interpret the fateful energies of the depths. Ages of communion with the darkness and reliance upon alien magics have corrupted the stygiras from the primitive human witches their ancestors were countless ages ago, transforming them into a terrifying, debased breed infused with magics not their own. In many a savage land, these crones were once or are still worshiped as seers and demigods, weaving magic and communing with the earth to manipulate their servants into obeying their selfish and grotesque whims. In other realms, they haunt the night, prowling from their caves to feed upon the unwary or make alliances with those cruel and ambitious enough to believe their perverse counsel. Yet for all their perverse blasphemies and primitive desires, their powers to see what none should and reduce life to brittle stone proves enough to inspire dread and superstitious belief in nearly all who hear of the harsh stone witches.

Stygiras on average stand 6-1/2 feet tall and weigh approximately 150 pounds.

ECOLOGY

It is said that the stygiras draw their power from stone and from the darkness. Certainly they live their entire lives in the dark, traveling through intricate, maze-like caverns and the moonless sky with equal ease. They draw their sustenance from the base things they scrape from the earth—vermin, molds, lichens, and whatever fleshy things

Sample Stygira Gems

Gem	Typical Value	Effect
Beryl	25 gp	Gem gaze causes the sickened condition.
Diamond	1,500 gp	Gem gaze causes a <i>charm monster</i> effect that lasts for 1 hour.
Jade	50 gp	Cast <i>poison</i> as a spell-like ability 3/day.
Opal	100 gp	Cast <i>stone shape</i> as a spell-like ability 3/day.
Painite	1,750 gp	Erupts in a 8d6 <i>fireball</i> dealing acid damage if thrown.

happen into their lairs. Although technically blind, stygiras have almost supernaturally keen hearing, taste, and touch, and so have no need for sight. What remains of the eyes that lurk as vestigial elements of their anatomy hide beneath the scarred flesh of their faces. While such remnant organs typically go unused, they can still detect the presence of light, an uncomfortable sensation that all stygiras take great pains to avoid. Stygiras can in fact travel under the skies, but they quickly become agoraphobic and retreat to the safety of shadowy canyons or caves as soon as possible. They avoid the sunlight hours, with most willing to face death in the darkness rather than take their chances venturing into the light.

All stygiras are female; they are capable of reproducing with humanoid of nearly any species and always bearing three or more withered—and typically stillborn—stygira young. Yet stygiras make up for their appallingly low live birth and survival rates with unnaturally long lifespans. None can say how long stygiras who don't meet their end by

Stygira Gems

The cultic lore passed down from stygira to stygira tells of the existence of rare gems of might that grant special powers to the stone witch who bears them. In rare cases, stygiras have been encountered clutching ancient and frighteningly sculpted stones exhibiting weird powers; in even more extraordinary cases, they have borne a veritable arsenal of crystals. While all gemstones of significant size allow a stygira to make use of her gem eye and gem gaze abilities, a few rare gems alter the crones' gaze abilities. These added abilities do not increase a stygira's CR.

The adjacent list of stones and abilities merely represent those few stones whose use has been documented after encounters with stygiras, and it is likely not all-inclusive. These effects function only for stygiras. Except where noted, new effects replace an ability's typical effect. Treat a stygira as an 8th-level caster for effects granting spell-like abilities. Also listed are the common values of crude, eye-sized gems of the following types.

violence might live, but instances of stone witches living for 3 or more centuries are well documented.

HABITAT & SOCIETY

Stygiras most commonly occupy lands near the phenomenally ancient tombs and monuments of the cyclops empires. While some of the crazed witches make the impossible claim that all stygira are the surviving mortal apprentices of primordial cyclops seers, saner minds posit that the predecessors of these crones were primitive human shamans and mystics who managed to tap into a degree of the fallen empires' powers. Whatever the case, the connection between stygiras and the ancient cyclopes lingers in their shared language and the mad scrawls covering many of these hags' lairs.



Kingmaker Part 3 of 6



Amiri

FEMALE HUMAN

DEITY Gorum
HOMELAND Mammoth Lords

CHARACTER TRAITS

CLASS/LEVEL Barbarian 7
ALIGNMENT Chaotic Neutral
INITIATIVE +1
SPEED 30 ft.

ABILITIES

STRENGTH 18
DEXTERITY 13
CONSTITUTION 16
INTELLIGENCE 10
WISDOM 12
CHARISMA 8

DEFENSE

HP 79
AC 19, touch 13, flat-footed 13 (+6 armor, +2 deflection, +1 Dex)
Fort +10, Ref +5, Will +5
DR 1/—

SKILLS

Acrobatics +9, Climb +12, Intimidate +9, Perception +11, Survival +11

FEATS

Exotic Weapon Proficiency (bastard sword), Extra Rage, Improved Bull Rush, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (bastard sword)

OFFENSE

Melee +1 *Large bastard sword* +11/+6 (2d8+7/19–20)
Ranged mwk longbow +9/+3 (1d8/x3)
Base Atk +7; CMB +11; CMD 24
Special Abilities damage reduction 1/–, fast movement, improved uncanny dodge, knockback, rage 25 rds/day, renewed vigor, strength surge, trap sense +2

Combat Gear *potion of cure moderate wounds*; **Gear** +2 *hide armor*, +1 *Large bastard sword*, mwk longbow with 20 arrows, javelins (2), spiked gauntlet, throwing axe, *belt of mighty constitution* +2, *cloak of resistance* +2, *ring of protection* +2, 160 gp

Amiri never quite fit into the expected gender roles of her tribe, and when the tribe attempted to send her on a suicide mission, she returned with an enormous trophy—a frost giant's sword. She has since abandoned her people, and has come to value her oversized sword (even though she can only truly wield it properly when her blood rage takes her). She never speaks of the circumstances that forced her to flee her homeland. Some things are better left unsaid.



Harsk

MALE DWARF

DEITY Torag
HOMELAND Druma

CHARACTER TRAITS

CLASS/LEVEL Ranger 7
ALIGNMENT Lawful Neutral
INITIATIVE +3
SPEED 20 ft.

ABILITIES

STRENGTH 14
DEXTERITY 16
CONSTITUTION 15
INTELLIGENCE 10
WISDOM 14
CHARISMA 6

DEFENSE

HP 63
AC 19, touch 13, flat-footed 13 (+5 armor, +3 Dex, +1 natural)
Fort +9, Ref +10, Will +8; +2 vs. poison, spells, and spell-like abilities
Senses darkvision 60 ft.

SKILLS

Handle Animal +8, Heal +12, Knowledge (geography) +10, Knowledge (nature) +10, Perception +12, Stealth +13, Survival +12

FEATS

Endurance, Far Shot, Improved Precise Shot, Iron Will, Precise Shot, Point Blank Shot, Rapid Reload (heavy crossbow)

OFFENSE

Melee +1 *greataxe* +10/+5 (1d12+4/x3)
Ranged +1 *heavy crossbow* +8 (1d10+1/19–20)
Base Atk +7; CMB +9; CMD 22 (26 vs. bull rush and trip)
Special Abilities favored enemy (fey +2), favored enemy (humanoid [giant] +4), favored terrain (mountains +2), hunter's bond (companions), track +3, wild empathy +5, woodland stride
Spells Prepared (CL 4th, Concentration +5)
2nd—*barkskin*
1st—*entangle* (DC 13), *resist energy*

Combat Gear *potion of cure moderate wounds* (3), *potion of pass without trace* (2), *screaming bolts* (4), *antitoxin*, *smokestick*, *tanglefoot bag*; **Other Gear** +2 *studded leather armor*, +1 *greataxe*, +1 *heavy crossbow* with 30 bolts, *amulet of natural armor* +1, *cloak of resistance* +2, *backpack*, *rations* (4), *signal whistle*, *teapot*, 306 gp

Harsk is, in many ways, not your standard dwarf, yet if there's anywhere that Harsk is dwarven, it is in his gruff and off-putting attitude. Much of his anger stems from the slaughter of his brother's warband. Harsk came upon the band, slain to a man by giants, moments too late to save his brother. Harsk's hatred of giants has fueled him and shapes his life. He prefers strong tea over alcohol (to keep his senses sharp), the wildlands of the surface world (where giants can be found), and the crossbow over the axe (which allows him to start fights faster). His companions value his skill at combat even if they're somewhat afraid of him.



Lini

FEMALE GNOME

DEITY Green Faith
HOMELAND Linnorm Kings

CHARACTER TRAITS

CLASS/LEVEL Druid 7
ALIGNMENT Neutral
INITIATIVE +1
SPEED 20 ft.

ABILITIES

STRENGTH 6
DEXTERITY 12
CONSTITUTION 16
INTELLIGENCE 10
WISDOM 18
CHARISMA 15

DEFENSE

HP 56
AC 17, touch 13, flat-footed 16 (+4 armor, +1 deflection, +1 Dex, +1 size)
Fort +9, Ref +6, Will +10; +2 vs. illusion
Senses low-light vision
Defensive Abilities resist nature's lure

SKILLS

Handle Animal +14, Heal +14, Knowledge (nature) +12, Perception +16, Spellcraft +10

FEATS

Augment Summoning, Lightning Reflexes, Natural Spell, Spell Focus (conjuration)

OFFENSE

Melee +1 sickle +5 (1d4-1)
Ranged sling +7 (1d3-2)
Base Atk +5; CMB +2; CMD 14
Special Abilities nature bond (animal), nature sense, trackless step, wild empathy +9, wild shape 3/day, woodland stride
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 7th; concentration +11) 1/day—*dancing lights*, *ghost sound* (DC 12), *prestidigitation*, *speak with animals*
Spells Prepared (CL 7th; concentration +11) 4th—*dispel magic*, *ice storm*
3rd—*daylight*, *neutralize poison*, *remove disease*
2nd—*bull's strength*, *barkskin*, *flaming sphere* (DC 16), *spider climb*
1st—*cure light wounds*, *entangle* (2; DC 15), *speak w/animals* (2)
0—*detect magic*, *know direction*, *light*, *stabilize*
Animal Companion small cat named Droogami

Combat Gear *wand of cure moderate wounds* (32 charges), *wand of produce flame* (43 charges), *scroll of call lightning* (2); **Other Gear** +2 leather armor, +1 sickle, sling with 10 bullets, *cloak of resistance* +1, *druid's vestments*, *headband of inspired Wisdom* +2, *ring of protection* +1, belt pouch, mistletoe, spell component pouch, sunrods (2), collection of de-barked sticks, 134 gp

Lini always seemed to possess a certain affinity with various creatures of the woodlands near where she grew up—particularly with larger predators like bears and snow leopards. In the years since her departure from the Lands of the Linnorm Kings, Lini has collected more than a dozen sticks—one from each forest or wood she visits. These sticks are to Lini a roadmap of her experiences, and while they may look indistinguishable to others, each holds a wealth of memories to the gnome druid.



Sajan

MALE HUMAN

DEITY Irori
HOMELAND Vudra

CHARACTER TRAITS

CLASS/LEVEL Monk 7
ALIGNMENT Lawful Neutral
INITIATIVE +3
SPEED 50 ft.

ABILITIES

STRENGTH 15
DEXTERITY 16
CONSTITUTION 14
INTELLIGENCE 10
WISDOM 12
CHARISMA 8

DEFENSE

HP 56
AC 20, touch 17, flat-footed 16 (+3 armor, +1 deflection, +3 Dex, +1 dodge, +1 monk, +1 Wis)
Fort +9, Ref +10, Will +8; +2 vs. enchantment
Defensive Abilities evasion, slow fall 30 ft.

SKILLS

Acrobatics +13, Climb +12, Perception +11, Sense Motive +11, Stealth +13

FEATS

Combat Reflexes, Deflect Arrows, Dodge, Improved Grapple, Improved Unarmed Strike, Mobility, Scorpion Style, Snatch Arrow, Spring Attack, Stunning Fist

OFFENSE

Melee unarmed strike +7 (1d8+2) or flurry of blows +7/+7/+2 (1d8+2) or +2 temple sword +9 (1d8+5)
Base Atk +5; CMB +9; CMD 24
Special Abilities high jump, ki pool (3; magic), purity of body, stunning fist (4/day, DC 14; fatigued), wholeness of body

Combat Gear *potion of cure moderate wounds*; **Gear** +2 temple sword, bracers of armor +3, *cloak of resistance* +2, *ring of protection* +1, wooden holy symbol, belt pouch, 185 gp

Sajan Gadadvara and his twin sister Sajni were separated when the lord they served was shamed and forced to cede half his army to the victor—among them Sajan's sister. Sajni was taken away from Vudra by her new master, and Sajan abandoned his own responsibilities to follow. He spent years trying in vain to find her, but has not yet given up. Sajan knows he cannot return to Vudra, for the padapranja there would execute him as a deserter. He cares not for his home country, however, and continues to seek out any clue that might point him toward his sister.

Next Month



BLOOD FOR BLOOD

by Neil Spicer

With the bandits defeated and ancient undead wizards put down, the Stolen Lands' newest kingdom is rising quickly to glory. Yet the growing power in the east has not gone unnoticed by those who seek to claim the west—be they boggard, bandit, or barbarian, jealous eyes look east and draw their plans against the PCs, eager to trade blood for blood in the relentless race to rule. Is the PCs' fledgling kingdom ready to defend itself in war?

ECOLOGY OF THE BOGGARD

by Todd Stewart

They hop and croak and eat strange dragonflies by the leering light of the moon. They caper and feud in the deepest swamps, offer blood sacrifice to their demon goddess Gogunta, and plot dire ends against their drylander enemies. Yet this but scratches the slimy surface of boggard society—find out the truth in this unflinching look at the self-styled kings of the bog!

TREASURES OF THE STOLEN LANDS

by Brian Cortijo

The roads of empires, the expeditions of explorers, and the escape routes of bandits, all cross in the River Kingdoms region known as the Stolen Lands. Discover some of the most wondrous treasures known to be lost in that untamed realm.

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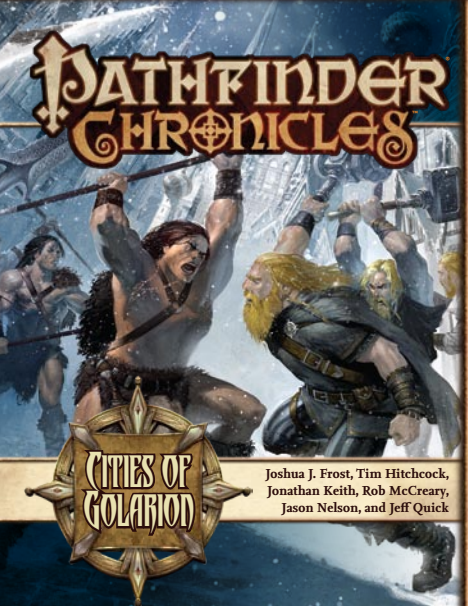
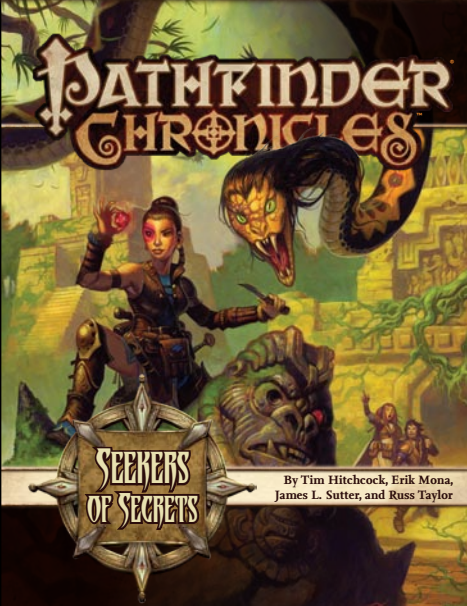
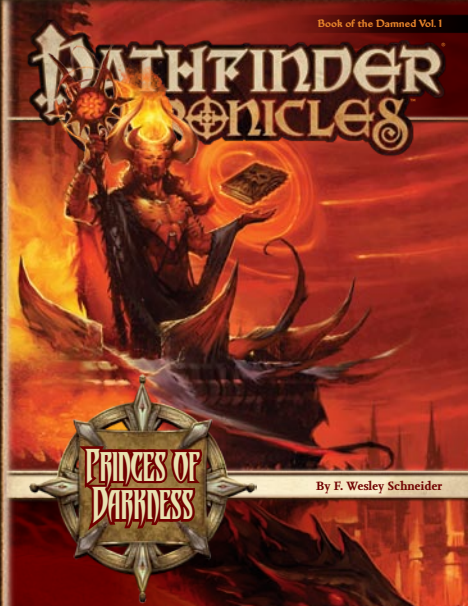
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A MISSING BROTHER

Source: Local aristocrat Edrist Hanvaki

Task: Edrist worries about his brother, Temin, who recently traveled to Varnheld to seal a deal with that village's gemcutter. Temin's been missing for days, and Edrist has promised a reward for news of his brother's fate, or at the very least, the return of his brother's mother-of-pearl brooch.

Completion: Learn of Temin's fate and report the discovery to Edrist.

Reward: Edrist is prepared to award those who bring him the news he seeks a payment of 3,000 gp.



THE OMELET KING

Source: Jamery Gerbasken, local chef

Task: Jamery is well known for his strange food obsessions. His latest is a desire to cook an enormous omelet from a single roc's egg. If someone can deliver such an egg to him, he'll organize a huge omelet-cooking competition!

Completion: Deliver one (undamaged) roc egg.

Reward: Not only is the omelet-cooking competition a huge success, but the excitement involved results in a surge of money into the kingdom, increasing the kingdom's treasury by 6 Build Points.



A MISSING PROFESSOR

Source: Jemanda Orlashen

Task: A representative of Oppara's Kitharedian Academy has come to the Stelen Lands seeking one of that institution's professors, a man named Ervil Pendred. It seems Ervil recently traveled to Varnheld, following up some obscure clue about ancient Tebaria, but he didn't actually arrange for a leave of absence.

Completion: Find Ervil and convince him to return to his job in Oppara.

Reward: Jemanda will reward whoever finds the missing professor with a fully charged wand of find traps.



FORGOTTEN HISTORY

Source: Tamerak Elenark

Task: Traveling scholar Tamerak Elenark has come to the Stelen Lands seeking clues into the history of ancient Tebarian culture. He's promised a magic circlet to anyone who can find new information for him.

Completion: Search the ruins in the Nemen Heights for surviving clues about Tebarian culture, particularly relating to the ancient cyclops tribes.

Reward: The magic circlet is in fact a headband of inspired wisdom +2.





Vanished Without a Trace

The Stolen Lands consume many wanderers—the perils of its rugged wildernesses and hidden mysteries prey upon even the wariest of travelers. Founded upon one of the most savage frontiers, the colony of Varnhold defied the many dangers of this harsh region. At least, it did until all the residents of the fledgling community completely disappeared. Now it falls to the PCs to discover what became of their eastern neighbor, a secret steeped in generations-old hatreds and the mysteries of an empire long crumbled to dust. Can they uncover the terrible secret behind this shocking disappearance before the same calamity befalls their own land?

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